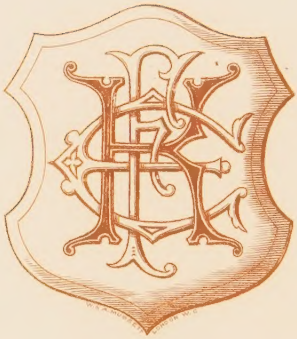

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WINDSOR CASTLE.

VOL. III.

George Cruikshank

WINDSOR CASTLE:

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE TOWER OF LONDON," ETC.

"About, about!
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out."
SHAKSPEARE.—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

"There is an old tale goes, that Herne the Hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
Doth all the winter time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns,
And there he blasts the tree. ——

You have heard of such a spirit; and well know
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received, and did deliver to our age,
This tale of Herne the Hunter for a truth."—IBID.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1843.

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"THE shades of evening had fallen as the keepers quitted Bagshot; and it was midnight as they entered the Home Park, and proceeded towards the fatal oak. It was pitchy dark; and they could only distinguish the tree by its white, scatched trunk. All at once, a blue flame, like a will-o'-the-wisp, appeared, flitted thrice round the tree, and

then remained stationary, its light falling upon a figure in a wild garb, with a rusty chain hanging from its left arm, and an antlered helm upon its head. They knew it to be Herne, and instantly fell down before him, while a burst of terrible laughter sounded in their ears.

"Without heeding them further, the spirit darted round the tree, rattling its chain, and uttering appalling imprecations. It then stopped, and turning to the terrified beholders, bade them, in a hollow voice, bring hounds and horses as for the chase on the following night, and vanished.

"Filled with dread, the keepers returned home, and the next day, old Osmond again sought the forester, and told him what had occurred.

"'You must obey the spirit's injunctions, or worse mischief will befal you,' said Urs-

wick. 'Go to the tree, mounted as for a hunting-party, and take the black steed given to Herne by the king, and the two black hounds with you. You will see what will ensue.' And without another word, he dismissed them.

"Osmond told his comrades what the forester had said, and though they were filled with alarm, they resolved upon compliance. At midnight, therefore, they rode towards the tree, with the black hounds in leash, and leading Herne's favourite horse, saddled and bridled. As they drew near, they again saw the terrible shape stalking round the tree, and heard the fearful imprecations.

"His spells ended, Herne called to Osmond to bring him his steed; and the old man tremblingly obeyed. In an instant, the mysterious being vaulted on its back, and in a voice of resistless authority, cried—'To

the forest!—to the forest!' With this, he dashed forward, and the whole party, hounds and men, hurried after him.

"They rode at a furious pace for five or six miles over the Great Park, the keepers wondering where their unearthly leader was taking them, and almost fancying they were hurrying to perdition, when they descended a hill side leading to the marsh, and halted before a huge beech-tree, where Herne dismounted and pronounced certain mystic words, accompanying them with strange gestures.

"Presently, he became silent and motionless. A flash of fire then burst from the roots of the tree, and the forester Urswick stood before him. But his aspect was more terrible and commanding than it had seemed heretofore to the keepers.

"'Welcome, Herne,' he cried; 'welcome,

lord of the forest! And you his comrades, and soon to be his followers, welcome too. The time is come for the fulfilment of your promise to me. I require you to form a band for Herne the Hunter, and to serve him as leader. Swear to obey him, and the spell that hangs over you shall be broken. If not, I leave you to the king's justice.'

"Not daring to refuse compliance, the keepers took the oath proposed,—and a fearful one it was! As soon as it was uttered, Urswick vanished, as he came, in a flash of fire. Herne then commanded the others to dismount, and made them prostrate themselves before him, and pay him homage. This done, he blew a strike on his horn, rode swiftly up the hill side, and a stag being unharboured, the chase commenced. Many a fat buck was hunted and slaughtered that night; and an hour before day-break,

Herne commanded them to lay the four finest and fattest at the foot of the beech tree, and then dismissed them, bidding them meet him at midnight at the scathed oak in the Home Park.

" They came as they were commanded; but, fearful of detection, they adopted strange disguises, not unlike those worn by the caitiffs who were put to death, a few weeks ago, by the king in the Great Park. Night after night, they thus went forth, thinning the herds of deer, and committing other outrages and depredations. Nor were their dark proceedings altogether unnoticed. Belated travellers crossing the forest beheld them, and related what they had seen; others watched for them, but they were so effectually disguised that they escaped detection.

" At last, however, the king returned to

the castle, and accounts of the strange doings in the forest were instantly brought him. Astonished at what he heard, and determined to ascertain the truth of the statement, he ordered the keepers to attend him that night in an expedition to the forest, when he hoped to encounter the demon huntsman and his band. Much alarmed, Osmond Crooke, who acted as spokesman, endeavoured, by representing the risk he would incur, to dissuade the king from the enterprise; but he would not be deterred, and they now gave themselves up for lost.

"As the castle clock tolled forth the hour of midnight, Richard, accompanied by a numerous guard, and attended by the keepers, issued from the gates, and rode towards the scathed oak. As they drew near the tree, the figure of Herne, mounted on his black steed, was discerned beneath

it. Deep fear fell upon all the beholders, but chiefly upon the guilty keepers, at the sight. The king, however, pressed forward, and cried, 'Why dost thou disturb the quietude of night, accursed spirit?'

"'Because I desire vengeance!' replied Herne, in a hollow voice. 'I was brought to my present woful condition by Osmond Crooke and his comrades.'

"'But you died by your own hand,—did you not?' demanded King Richard.

"'Yea,' replied Herne; 'but I was driven to the deed by an infernal spell laid upon me by the malice of the wretches I have denounced. Hang them upon this tree, and I will trouble these woods no longer while thou reignest!'

"The king looked round at the keepers. They all remained obdurate, except Roger

Barfoot, who, falling on his knees, confessed his guilt, and accused the others.

"'It is enough,' cried the king to Herne; 'they shall all suffer for their offence.'

"Upon this, a flash of fire enveloped the spirit and his horse, and he vanished.

"The king kept his word. Osmond and his comrades were all hanged upon the scathed tree, nor was Herne seen again in the forest while Richard sat upon the throne. But he re-appeared with a new band at the commencement of the rule of Henry the Fourth, and again hunted the deer at night. His band was destroyed, but he defied all attempts at capture; and so it has continued to our own time, for not one of the seven monarchs who have held the castle since Richard's day, have been able to drive him from the forest."

"Nor will the present monarch be able to drive him thence," said a deep voice. "As long as Windsor Forest endures, Herne the Hunter will haunt it."

All turned at the exclamation, and saw that it proceeded from a tall dark man, in an archer's garb, standing behind Simon Quanden's chair.

"Thou hast told thy legend fairly enough, good clerk of the kitchen," continued this personage; "but thou art wrong on many material points."

"I have related the story as it was related to me," said Cutbeard, somewhat nettled at the remark; "but perhaps you will set me right where I have erred."

"It is true that Herne was a keeper in the reign of Richard the Second," replied the tall archer. "It is true also that he was expert in all matters of woodcraft, and

that he was in high favour with the king; but he was bewitched by a lovely damsel, and not by a weird forester. He carried off a nun, and dwelt with her in a cave in the forest, where he assembled his brother keepers, and treated them to the king's venison and the king's wine."

"A sacrilegious villain and a reprobate!" exclaimed Launcelot Rutter.

"His mistress was fair enough, I will warrant her," said Kit Coo.

"She was the very image of this damsel," rejoined the tall archer, pointing to Mabel, "and fair enough to work his ruin, for it was through her that the fiend tempted him. The charms that proved his undoing were fatal to her also, for in a fit of jealousy he slew her. The remorse occasioned by this deed made him destroy himself."

"Well, your version of the legend may

be the correct one, for aught I know, worthy sir," said Cutbeard; "but I see not that it accounts for Herne's antlers so well as mine; unless indeed he were wedded to the nun, who you say played him false. But how come you to know she resembled Mabel Lyndwood?"

"Ay, I was thinking of that myself," said Simon Quanden. "How do you know that, master?"

"Because I have seen her picture," replied the tall archer.

"Painted by Satan's chief limner, I suppose?" rejoined Cutbeard.

"He who painted it had seen her," rejoined the tall archer, sternly. "But, as I have said, it was the very image of this damsel."

And as he uttered the words, he quitted the kitchen.

"Who is that archer?" demanded Cutbeard, looking after him.

But no one could answer the question, nor could any one tell when he had entered the kitchen.

"Strange!" exclaimed Simon Quanden, crossing himself. "Have you ever seen him before, Mabel?"

"I almost think I have," she replied, with a slight shudder.

"I half suspect he is Herne, himself," whispered Shoreditch to Paddington.

"It may be," responded the other; "his glance made my blood run cold."

"You look somewhat fatigued, sweetheart," said Deborah, observing Mabel's uneasiness. "Come with me, and I will shew you to a chamber."

Glad to escape, Mabel followed the good dame out of the kitchen, and they ascended

a winding staircase, which brought them to a commodious chamber in the upper part of Henry the Seventh's buildings, where Deborah sat down with her young charge, and volunteered a great deal of good advice to her, which the other listened to with becoming attention, and promised to profit by it.

VIII.

OF THE MYSTERIOUS NOISE HEARD IN THE CURFEW TOWER.

On quitting the kitchen, Henry, having been informed by Bouchier that Tristram Lyndwood was lodged in the prison-chamber in the lower gateway, proceeded thither to question him. He found the old man seated on a bench, with his hands tied behind him; but though evidently much alarmed at his situation, he could not be

brought either by threats or proffers, to make any confession.

Out of patience, at length the king ordered him to be conveyed to the dungeon beneath the Curfew Tower, and personally superintended his removal.

"I will find a means of shaking his obstinacy," said Henry, as he quitted the vault with Bouchier. "If I cannot move him by other means, I may through his grand-daughter. I will interrogate him in her presence to-night."

"To-night, sire!" exclaimed Bouchier.

"Ay, to-night," repeated the king. "I am resolved, even if it should cost the life of this maiden, whose charms have moved me so, to break the infernal machinery woven around me. And now as I think it not unlikely the miscreant Herne may attempt the prisoner's deliverance, let the

strictest watch be kept over the tower. Station an arquebusier throughout the night at the door of the dungeon, and another at the entrance to the chamber on the ground floor. Your own post must be on the roof of the fortification, that you may watch if any attempt is made to scale it from the town side, or to get in through the loop-holes. Keep a sharp look out, Bouchier, for I shall hold you responsible if any mischance occurs."

"I will do my best," my liege, replied Bouchier; "and were it with a mortal foe I had to contend, I should have no fear. But what vigilance can avail against a fiend?"

"You have heard my injunctions, and will attend to them," rejoined the king, harshly. "I shall return anon to the examination."

So saying, he departed.

Brave as a lion on ordinary occasions, Bouchier entered upon his present duty with reluctance and misgiving; and he found the arquebusiers, by whom he was attended, albeit stout soldiers, equally uneasy. Herne had now become an object of general dread throughout the castle; and the possibility of an encounter with him was enough to daunt the boldest breast. Disguising his alarm, Bouchier issued his directions in an authoritative tone, and then mounted with three arquebusiers to the summit of the tower. It was now dark, but the moon soon arose, and her beams rendered every object as distinguishable as daylight would have done, so that watch was easily kept. But nothing occurred to occasion alarm, until, all at once, a noise, like that of a hammer stricken against a board, was heard in the chamber below.

Drawing his sword, Bouchier hurried down the steps leading into this chamber, which was buried in darkness, and advanced so precipitately and incautiously in the gloom, that he struck his head against a cross beam. The violence of the blow stunned him for a moment, but as soon as he recovered, he called to the guard in the lower chamber to bring up a torch. The order was promptly obeyed; but, meanwhile, the sound had ceased, and, though they searched about, they could not discover the occasion of it.

This, however, was not so wonderful, for the singular construction of the chamber, with its numerous cross beams, its deep embrasures and recesses, its insecure and uneven floor, its steep ladder-like staircases, was highly favourable to concealment, it being utterly impossible, owing to the intersections of the beams, for the searchers

to see far before them, or to move about quickly. In the midst of the chamber was a large wooden compartment enclosing the cumbrous and uncouth machinery of the castle clock, and through this box ran the cord communicating with the belfry above. At that time pieces of ordnance were mounted in all the embrasures, but there is now only one gun, placed in a port-hole commanding Thames Street, and the long Thoroughfare leading to Eton. The view from this port-hole of the groves of Eton, and of the lovely plains on the north-west, watered by the river, is enchanting beyond description.

Viewed from a recess which has been partly closed, the appearance of this chamber is equally picturesque and singular; and it is scarcely possible to pass beneath its huge beams, or to gaze at the fantastic, yet

striking combinations they form in connexion with the deep embrasures, the steep staircases, and trap-doors, and not feel that the whole place belongs to romance, and that a multitude of strange and startling stories must be connected with it. The old architects were indeed great romancers, and built for the painter and the poet.

Bouchier and his companion crept about under the great mesh-work of beams — peered into all the embrasures, and beneath the carriages of the culverins. There was a heap of planks and beams lying on the floor between the two staircases, but no one was near it. The result of their investigations did not tend to decrease their alarm. Bouchier would fain have had the man keep watch in the chamber, but neither threats nor entreaties could induce him to remain there. He was therefore sent below, and

the captain returned to the roof. He had scarcely emerged upon the leads when the hammering recommenced more violently than before. In vain Bouchier ordered his men to go down. No one would stir; and superstitious fear had by this time obtained such mastery over the captain, that he hesitated to descend alone. To add to his vexation, the arquebusier had taken the torch with him, so that he should have to proceed in darkness. At length he mustered up courage to make the attempt; but he paused between each step, peering through the gloom, and half-fancying he could discern the figure of Herne near the spot where the pile of wood lay. Certain it was that the sound of diabolical laughter, mingled with the rattling of the chain and the sharp blows of the hammer, smote his ears. The laughter became yet louder as Bouchier ad-

vanced, the hammering ceased, and the clanking of the chain shewed that its mysterious wearer was approaching the foot of the steps to meet him. But the captain had not nerve enough for the encounter. Invoking the protection of the saints, he beat a precipitate retreat, and closed the little door at the head of the steps after him.

The demon was apparently satisfied with the alarm he had occasioned, for the hammering was not renewed at that time.

IX.

SHEWING THE VACILLATIONS OF THE KING BETWEEN WOLSEY AND ANNE BOLEYN.

Before returning to the state apartments, Henry took a turn on the ramparts on the north side of the castle, between the Curfew Tower and the Winchester Tower, and lingered for a short time on the bastion commanding that part of the acclivity where the approach, called the Hundred Steps, is now contrived. Here he cautioned

the sentinels to be doubly vigilant throughout the night; and having gazed for a moment at the placid stream flowing at the foot of the castle, and tinged with the last rays of the setting sun, he proceeded to the royal lodgings, and entered the banquet-chamber, where supper was already served.

Wolsey sat on his right hand, but he did not vouchsafe him a single word—addressing the whole of his discourse to the Duke of Suffolk, who was placed on his left. As soon as the repast was over, he retired to his closet. But the cardinal would not be so repulsed, and sent one of his gentlemen to crave a moment's audience of the king, which, with some reluctance, was accorded.

"Well, cardinal!" cried Henry, as Wolsey presented himself, and the usher withdrew. "You are playing a deep game with me, as

you think; but take heed, for I see through it!"

"I pray you dismiss these suspicions from your mind, my liege," said Wolsey. "No servant was ever more faithful to his master than I have been to you."

"No servant ever took better care of himself," cried the king, fiercely. "Not alone have you wronged me to enrich yourself, but you are ever intriguing with my enemies. I have nourished in my breast a viper; but I will cast you off—will crush you as I would the noxious reptile!"

And he stamped upon the floor, as if he could have trampled the cardinal beneath his foot.

"Beseech you, calm yourself, my liege," replied Wolsey, in the soft and deprecatory tone which he had seldom known to fail with the king. "I have never thought of my

own aggrandizement, but as it was likely to advance your power. For the countless benefits I have received at your hands, my soul overflows with gratitude. You have raised me from the meanest condition to the highest. You have made me your confidant, your adviser, your treasurer, and with no improper boldness I say it, your friend. But I defy the enemies who have poisoned your ears against me, to prove that I have ever abused the trust placed in me. The sole fault that can be imputed to me is, that I have meddled more with temporal matters than with spiritual; and it is a crime for which I must answer before Heaven. But I have so acted because I felt that I might thereby best serve your highness. If I have aspired to the papal throne,—which you well know I have,—it has been that I might be yet a more

powerful friend to your majesty, and render you, what you are entitled to be, the first prince in Christendom."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the king, who was, nevertheless, moved by the artful appeal.

"The gifts I have received from foreign princes," pursued Wolsey, seeing the effect he had produced, "the wealth I have amassed, have all been with a view of benefiting your majesty.

"Humph!" exclaimed the king.

"To prove that I speak the truth, sire," continued the wily cardinal, "the palace at Hampton Court, which I have just completed——"

"And at a cost more lavish than I myself should have expended on it," interrupted the king, angrily.

"If I had destined it for myself, I should

not have spent a tithe of what I have done," rejoined Wolsey. "Your highness's unjust accusations force me to declare my intentions somewhat prematurely. Deign," he cried, throwing himself at the king's feet,—"deign to accept that palace and all within it. You were pleased, during your late residence there, to express your approval of it. And I trust it will find equal favour in your eyes, now that it is your own."

"By holy Mary, a royal gift!" cried Henry, — "rise, cardinal. You are not the grasping, selfish person you have been represented."

"Declare as much to my enemies, sire, and I shall be more than content," replied Wolsey. "You will find the palace better worth acceptance than at first sight might appear."

"How so?" cried the king.

"Your highness will be pleased to take this key," said the cardinal;—"it is the key of the cellar."

"You have some choice wine there," cried Henry, significantly—"given you by some religious house,—or sent you by some foreign potentate—ha!"

"It is wine that a king might prize," replied the cardinal. "Your majesty will find a hundred hogsheads in that cellar;—and each hogshead filled with gold."

"You amaze me!" cried the king, feigning astonishment. "And all this you freely give me?"

"Freely and fully, sire," replied Wolsey. "Nay, I have saved it for you. Men think I have cared for myself, whereas I have cared only for your majesty. Oh! my dear liege, by the devotion I have just approved to you, and which I would also approve, if

needful, with my life, I beseech you to consider well before you raise Anne Boleyn to the throne. In giving you this counsel, I know I hazard the favour I have just regained. But even at *that* hazard, I must offer it. Your infatuation blinds you to the terrible consequences of the step. The union is odious to all your subjects—but most of all to those not tainted with the new heresies and opinions. It will never be forgiven by the Emperor Charles the Fifth, who will seek to avenge the indignity offered to his illustrious relative ; while Francis will gladly make it a pretext for breaking his truce with you. Add to this, the displeasure of the apostolic see, and it must be apparent, that powerful as you are, your position will be one of infinite peril."

" Thus far advanced, I cannot honourably abandon the divorce," said Henry.

"Nor do I advise its abandonment, sire," replied Wolsey; "but do not let it be a means of injuring you with all men. Do not let a mal-alliance place your very throne in jeopardy; as, with your own subjects and all foreign powers against you, must necessarily be the case."

"You speak warmly, cardinal," said Henry.

"My zeal prompts me to do so," replied Wolsey. "Anne Boleyn is in no respect worthy of the honour you propose her."

"And whom do you think more worthy?" demanded Henry.

"Those whom I have already recommended to your majesty — the Duchess D'Alencon, or the Princess Renée," replied Wolsey; "by a union with either of whom, you would secure the cordial co-operation of Francis, and the interests of the see of Rome,

which in the event of a war with Spain you may need."

"No, Wolsey," replied Henry, taking a hasty turn across the chamber; "no considerations of interest or security shall induce me to give up Anne. I love her too well for that. Let the lion Charles roar, the fox Francis snarl, and the hydra-headed Clement launch forth his flames; I will remain firm to my purpose. I will not play the hypocrite with you, whatever I may do with others. I cast off Catherine that I may wed Anne, because I cannot otherwise obtain her. And shall I now, when I have dared so much, and when the prize is in my grasp, abandon it?—Never! Threats, expostulations, entreaties, are alike unavailing."

"I grieve to hear it, my liege!" replied Wolsey, heaving a deep sigh; "it is an ill-

omened union, and will bring woe to you, woe to your realm, and woe to the Catholic church."

"And woe also to you, false cardinal," cried Anne Boleyn, throwing aside the arras, and stepping forward. "I have overheard what has passed; and from my heart of hearts, I thank you, Henry, for the love you have displayed for me. But I here solemnly vow never to give my hand to you till Wolsey is dismissed from your councils."

"Anne!" exclaimed the king.

"My own enmity I could forego," pursued Anne, vehemently, "but I cannot forgive him his duplicity and perfidy towards you. He has just proffered you his splendid palace of Hampton, and his treasures,—and wherefore?—I will tell you,—because he feared they would be wrested from him.

His jester had acquainted him with the discovery just made of the secret hoard, and he was therefore compelled to have recourse to this desperate move. But I was apprised of his intentions by Will Sommers, and have come in time to foil him.

"By my faith, I believe you are right, sweetheart!" said the king.

"Go tell your allies, Francis and Clement, that the king's love for me outweighs his fear of them," cried Anne, laughing spitefully. "As for you, I regard you as nothing."

"Vain woman, your pride will be abased," rejoined Wolsey, bitterly.

"Vain man, you are already abased," replied Anne. "A few weeks ago I would have made terms with you. Now I am your mortal enemy, and will never rest till I have procured your downfall."

"The king will have an amiable consort, truly," sneered Wolsey.

"He will have one who can love him and hate his foes," replied Anne; "and not one who would side with them and thee, as would be the case with the Duchess D'Alencon or the Princess Renée. Henry, you know the sole terms on which you can procure my hand."

The king nodded a playful affirmative.

"Then dismiss him at once,—disgrace him," said Anne.

"Nay, nay," replied Henry, "the divorce is not yet passed. You are angered now, and will view matters more coolly to-morrow."

"I shall never change my resolution," she replied.

"If my dismissal and disgrace can save my sovereign, I pray him to sacrifice me

without hesitation," said Wolsey; "but while I have liberty of speech with him, and aught of power remaining, I will use it to his advantage. I pray your majesty suffer me to retire."

And receiving a sign of acquiescence from the king, he withdrew, amid the triumphant laughter of Anne.

X.

HOW TRISTRAM LYNDWOOD WAS INTERROGATED BY THE KING.

Anne Boleyn remained with her royal lover for a few minutes to pour forth her gratitude for the attachment he had displayed to her, and to confirm the advantage she had gained over Wolsey. As soon as she was gone, Henry summoned an usher, and giving him some instructions respecting Mabel Lyndwood, proceeded to the Curfew Tower.

Nothing was said to him of the strange noise that had been heard in the upper chamber, for the arquebusiers were fearful of exciting his displeasure by a confession of their alarm, and he descended at once to the dungeon.

"Well, fellow," he cried, sternly regarding the captive, who arose at his entrance, "you have now had ample time for reflection, and I trust are in a better frame of mind than when I last spoke with you. I command you to declare all you know concerning Herne the Hunter, and to give me such information respecting the proscribed felon, Morgan Fenwolf, as will enable me to accomplish his capture."

"I have already told your highness, that my mouth is sealed by an oath of secrecy," replied Tristram, humbly, but firmly.

"Obstinate dog! thou shalt either speak,

or I will hang thee from the top of this tower as I hanged Mark Fytton, the butcher," roared Henry.

"You will execute your sovereign pleasure, my liege," said the old man. "My life is in your hands. It is little matter whether it is closed now or a year hence. I have well-nigh run out my term."

"If thou carest not for thyself, thou mayst not be equally indifferent to another," cried the king. "What, ho! bring in his grand-daughter."

The old man started at the command, and trembled violently. The next moment, Mabel was led into the dungeon by Shoreditch and Paddington. Behind her came Nicholas Clamp. On seeing her grandsire, she uttered a loud cry, and would have rushed towards him, but she was held back by her companions.

"Oh! grandfather," she cried; "what have you done?—why do I find you here?"

Tristram groaned, and averted his head.

"He is charged with felony and sorcery," said the king, sternly; "and you, maiden, come under the same suspicion."

"Believe it not, sire," cried the old man, flinging himself at Henry's feet; "oh! believe it not. Whatever you may judge of me, believe her innocent. She was brought up most devoutly, by a lay sister of the monastery at Chertsey; and she knows nothing, save by report, of what passes in the forest."

"Yet she has seen and conversed with Morgan Fenwolf," said the king.

"Not since he was outlawed," said Tristram.

"I saw him to-day, as I was brought to the castle," cried Mabel; "and—" but

recollecting that she might implicate her grandfather, she suddenly stopped.

"What said he?—ha!" demanded the king.

"I will tell your majesty what passed," interposed Nicholas Clamp, stepping forward, "for I was with the damsel at the time. He came upon us suddenly from behind a great tree, and ordered her to accompany him to her grandsire."

"Ha!" exclaimed the king.

"But he had no authority for what he said, I am well convinced," pursued Clamp. "Mabel disbelieved him, and refused to go; and I should have captured him if the fiend he serves had not lent him a helping hand."

"What says the prisoner himself to this?" observed the king. "Didst thou send Fenwolf on the errand?"

"I did," replied Tristram. "I sent him to prevent her from going to the castle."

Mabel sobbed audibly.

"Thou art condemned by thy own confession, caitiff!" said the king, "and thou knowest upon what terms alone thou canst save thyself from the hangman, and thy grand-daughter from the stake!"

"Oh, mercy, sire,—mercy!" shrieked Mabel.

"Your fate rests with your grandsire," said the king, sternly. "If he chooses to be your executioner, he will remain silent."

"Oh! speak, grandsire, speak!" cried Mabel. "What matters the violation of an unholy vow?"

"Give me till to-morrow for consideration, sire," said the old man.

"Thou shalt have till midnight," replied

the king; "and till then, Mabel shall remain with thee."

"I would rather be left alone," said Tristram.

"I doubt it not," replied the king; "but it shall not be."

And without bestowing a look at Mabel, whose supplications he feared might shake his purpose, he quitted the vault, with his attendants, leaving her alone with her grandsire.

"I shall return at midnight," he said to the arquebusier stationed at the door; "and meanwhile, let no one enter the dungeon—not even the Duke of Suffolk, unless," he added, holding forth his hand to display a ring, "he shall bring this signet."

XI.

OF THE BRIEF ADVANTAGE GAINED BY THE QUEEN AND THE CARDINAL.

As the king, wholly unattended—for he had left the archers at the Curfew Tower—was passing at the back of Saint George's Chapel, near the north transept, he paused for a moment to look at the embattled entrance to the New Commons—a structure erected in the eleventh year of his own reign, by James Denton, a canon, and after-

wards Dean of Lichfield, for the accommodation of such chantry priests and choristers as had no place in the college. Over the doorway, surmounted by a niche, ran (and still runs) the inscription—"ÆDES PRO SACELLANORUM CHORISTARUM CŌVIVIIS EXTRUCTA, A.D. 1519." The building has since been converted into one of the canon's houses.

While he was contemplating this beautiful gateway, which was glimmering in the bright moonlight, a tall figure suddenly darted from behind one of the buttresses of the chapel, and seized his left arm with an iron grasp. The suddenness of the attack took him by surprise; but he instantly recovered himself, plucked away his arm, and drawing his sword, made a pass at his assailant, who, however, avoided the thrust, and darted with inconceivable swiftness

through the archway leading to the cloisters. Though Henry followed as quickly as he could, he lost sight of the fugitive, but just as he was about to enter the passage running between the tomb-house and the chapel, he perceived a person in the south ambulatory, evidently anxious to conceal himself, and rushing up to him, and dragging him to the light, he found it was no other than the cardinal's jester, Patch.

"What dost thou here, knave?" cried Henry, angrily.

"I am waiting for my master, the cardinal," replied the jester, terrified out of his wits.

"Waiting for him here!" cried the king. "Where is he?"

"In that house," replied Patch, pointing to a beautiful bay window full of stained glass, overhanging the exquisite arches of the north ambulatory.

"Why that is Doctor Sampson's dwelling," cried Henry—"he who was chaplain to the queen, and is a strong opponent of the divorce! What doth he there?"

"I am sure I know not," replied Patch, whose terror increased each moment. "Perhaps I have mistaken the house. Indeed, I am sure it must be Doctor Voysey's, the next door."

"Thou liest, knave!" cried Henry, fiercely; "thy manner convinces me there is some treasonable practice going forward. But I will soon find it out. Attempt to give the alarm, and I will cut thy throat."

With this, he proceeded to the back of the north ambulatory, and finding the door he sought unfastened, raised the latch, and walked softly in. But before he got halfway down the passage, Doctor Sampson himself issued from an inner room with a lamp

in his hand. He started on seeing the king, and exhibited great alarm.

"The cardinal of York is here—I know it," said Henry, in a deep whisper. "Lead me to him."

"Oh! go not forward, my gracious liege," cried Sampson, placing himself in his path.

"Wherefore not?" rejoined the king. "Ha! what voice is that I hear in the upper chamber. Is she here, and with Wolsey? Out of my way, man," he added, pushing the canon aside, and rushing up the short wooden staircase.

When Wolsey returned from his interview with the king, which had been so unluckily interrupted by Anne Boleyn, he found his ante-chamber beset with a crowd of suitors, to whose solicitations he was compelled to listen, and having been detained in

this manner for nearly half-an-hour, he at length retired into an inner room.

"Vile sycophants!" he muttered, "they bow the knee before me, and pay me greater homage than they render the king,—but though they have fed upon my bounty, and risen by my help, not one of them, if he was aware of my true position, but would desert me. Not one of them but would lend a helping had to crush me. Not one but would rejoice in my downfal. But they have not deceived me. I knew them from the first—saw through their hollowness, and despised them. While power lasts to me, I will punish some of them. While power lasts!" he repeated. "Have I any power remaining? I have already given up Hampton and my treasures to the king; and the work of spoliation once commenced, the royal plunderer will not be content till he has

robbed me of all; while his minion Anne Boleyn has vowed my destruction. Well, I will not yield tamely, nor fall unavenged!"

As these thoughts passed through his mind, Patch, who had waited for a favourable moment to approach him, delivered him a small billet, carefully sealed, and fastened with a silken thread. Wolsey took it, and broke it open; and as his eye eagerly scanned its contents, the expression of his countenance totally changed. A flash of joy and triumph irradiated his fallen features; and thrusting the note into the folds of his robe, he inquired of the jester by whom it had been brought, and how long?

"It was brought by a messenger from Doctor Sampson," replied Patch, and was committed to me with special injunctions to deliver it to your grace immediately on your return, and secretly."

The cardinal sat down, and for a few moments appeared lost in deep reflection; he then arose, and telling Patch he should return presently, quitted the chamber. But the jester, who was of an inquisitive turn, and did not like to be confined to half a secret, determined to follow him, and accordingly tracked him along the great corridor, down a winding staircase, through a private door near the Norman Gateway, across the middle ward, and finally saw him enter Doctor Sampson's dwelling, at the back of the north ambulatory. He was reconnoitring the windows of the house from the opposite side of the cloisters, in the hope of discovering something, when he was caught, as before mentioned, by the king.

Wolsey, meanwhile, was received by Dr. Sampson at the door way of his dwelling, and ushered by him into a small chamber,

on the upper floor, wainscoted with curiously-carved and lustrously black oak. A silver lamp was burning on the table, and in the recess of the window, which was screened by thick curtains, sat a majestic lady, who rose on the cardinal's entrance. It was Catherine of Arragon.

"I attend your pleasure, madam," said Wolsey, with a profound inclination.

"You have been long in answering my summons," said the queen; "but I could not expect greater promptitude. Time was when a summons from Catherine of Arragon would have been quickly and cheerfully attended to; when the proudest noble in the land would have borne her message to you, and when you would have passed through crowds to her audience-chamber. Now, another holds her place, and she is obliged secretly to enter the castle where she once

ruled, to despatch a valet to her enemy, to attend his pleasure, and to receive him in the dwelling of a humble canon. Times are changed with me, Wolsey — sadly changed!"

"I have been in attendance on the king, madam, or I should have been with you sooner," replied Wolsey. "It grieves me sorely to see you here."

"I want not your pity," replied the queen, proudly. "I did not send for you to gratify your malice by exposing my abject state. I did not send for you to insult me by false sympathy; but in the hope that your own interest would induce you to redress the wrongs you have done me."

"Alas! madam, I fear it is now too late to repair the error I have committed," said Wolsey, in a tone of affected penitence and sorrow.

"You admit, then, that it was an error!" cried Catherine. "Well, that is something. Oh! that you had paused before you began this evil work—before you had raised a storm which will destroy me and yourself. Your quarrel with my nephew the Emperor Charles has cost *me* dear, but it will cost *you* yet more dearly."

"I deserve all your reproaches, madam," said Wolsey, with feigned meekness; "and I will bear them without a murmur. But you have sent for me for some specific object, I presume?"

"I sent for you to give me aid, as much for your own sake as mine," replied the queen, "for you are in equal danger. Prevent this divorce—foil Anne—and you retain the King's favour. Our interests are so far leagued together, that you must serve me to serve yourself. My object is to gain

time to enable my friends to act. Your colleague is secretly favourable to me. Pronounce no sentence here, but let the cause be removed to Rome. My nephew the emperor will prevail upon the pope to decide in my favour."

"I dare not thus brave the king's displeasure, madam," replied Wolsey.

"Dissembler!" exclaimed Catherine. "I now perceive the insincerity of your professions. Thus much I have said to try you. And now to my real motive for sending for you. I have in my possession certain letters that will ruin Anne Boleyn with the king."

"Ha!" exclaimed the cardinal, joyfully; "if that be the case, all the rest will be easy. Let me see the letters, I pray you, madam."

Before Catherine could reply, the door

was thrown violently open, and the king stood before them.

"Soh!" roared Henry, casting a terrible look at Wolsey, "I have caught you at your treasonable practices at last!—And you, madam," he added, turning to Catherine, who meekly, but steadily, returned his gaze, "what brings you here again? Because I pardoned your indiscretion yesterday, think not I shall always be so lenient. You will leave the castle instantly. As to Wolsey, he shall render me a strict account of his conduct."

"I have nothing to declare, my liege," replied Wolsey, recovering himself. "I leave it to the queen to explain why I came hither."

"The explanation shall be given at once," said Catherine. "I sent for the cardinal to request him to lay before your majesty

these two letters from Anne Boleyn to Sir Thomas Wyat, that you might judge whether one who could write thus would make you a fitting consort. You disbelieved my charge of levity yesterday. Read these, sire, and judge whether I spoke the truth."

Henry glanced at the letters, and his brow grew dark.

"What say you to them, my liege?" cried Catherine, with a glance of triumph. "In the one she vows eternal constancy to Sir Thomas Wyat; and in the other,—written after her engagement to you,—she tells him that though they can never meet as heretofore, she will always love him."

"Ten thousand furies!" cried the king. "Where got you these letters, madam?"

"They were given to me by a tall dark man, as I quitted the castle last night," said the queen. "He said they were taken

from the person of Sir Thomas Wyat while he lay concealed in the forest in the cave of Herne the Hunter."

"If I thought she wrote them," cried Henry, in an excess of jealous fury, "I would cast her off for ever."

"Methinks your Majesty should be able to judge whether they are true or false," said Catherine. "I know her writing well—too well, alas!—and am satisfied they are genuine."

"I am well assured that Wyat was concealed in the Lady Anne's Chamber when your majesty demanded admittance and could not obtain it,—when the Earl of Surrey sacrificed himself for her and for his friend," said Wolsey.

"Perdition!" exclaimed the king, striking his brow with his clenched hand. "Oh! Catherine," he continued, after a pause, dur-

which she intently watched the workings of his countenance, "and it was for this light-hearted creature I was about to cast you off!"

"I forgive you, sire—I forgive you!" exclaimed the queen, clasping his hands, and bedewing them with grateful tears. "You have been deceived. Heaven keep you in the same mind!"

"You have preserved me," said Henry; "but you must not tarry here. Come with me to the royal lodgings."

"No, Henry," replied Catherine, with a shudder—"not while *she* is there."

"Make no conditions, madam," whispered Wolsey. "Go."

"She shall be removed to-morrow," said Henry.

"In that case I am content to smother my feelings," said the queen.

"Come, then, Kate," said Henry, taking her hand. "Lord cardinal, you will attend us."

"Right gladly, my liege," replied Wolsey. "If this mood will only endure," he muttered, "all will go well. But his jealousy must not be allowed to cool. Would that Wyat were here!"

Doctor Sampson could scarcely credit his senses, as he beheld the august pair come forth together, and a word from Wolsey explaining what had occurred, threw him into transports of delight. But the surprise of the good canon was nothing to that exhibited as Henry and Catherine entered the royal lodgings, and the king ordered his own apartments to be instantly prepared for her majesty's reception.

XII.

HOW TRISTRAM LYNDWOOD AND MABEL WERE LIBERATED.

INTELLIGENCE of the queen's return was instantly conveyed to Anne Boleyn, and filled her with indescribable alarm. All her visions of power and splendour seemed to melt away at once. She sent for her father, Lord Rochford, who hurried to her in a state of the utmost anxiety, and closely questioned her whether the extraordinary change

had not been occasioned by some imprudence of her own. But she positively denied the charge; alleging that she had parted with the king scarcely an hour before on terms of the most perfect amity, and with the full conviction that she had accomplished the cardinal's ruin.

"You should not have put forth your hand against him, till you were sure of striking the blow," said Rochford. "There is no telling what secret influence he has over the king; and there may yet be a hard battle to fight. But not a moment must be lost in counteracting his operations. Luckily, Suffolk is here; and his enmity to the cardinal will make him a sure friend to us. Pray Heaven you have not given the king fresh occasion for jealousy! That is all I fear."

And quitting his daughter, he sought out

Suffolk, who, alarmed at what appeared like a restoration of Wolsey to favour, promised heartily to co-operate with him in the struggle, and that no time might be lost, the duke proceeded at once to the royal closet, where he found the king pacing moodily to and fro.

"Your majesty seems disturbed," said the duke.

"Disturbed!—ay!" exclaimed the king. "I have enough to disturb me. I will never love again. I will forswear the whole sex. Harkee, Suffolk, you are my brother, my second self, and know all the secrets of my heart. After the passionate devotion I have displayed for Anne Boleyn,—after all I have done for her,—all I have risked for her,—I have been deceived."

"Impossible, my liege!" exclaimed Suffolk.

"Why, so I thought," cried Henry, "and

I turned a deaf ear to all insinuations thrown out against her, till proof was afforded which I could no longer doubt."

"And what was the amount of the proof, my liege?" asked Suffolk.

"These letters," said Henry, handing them to him, "found on the person of Sir Thomas Wyat."

"But these only prove, my liege, the existence of a former passion,—nothing more," remarked Suffolk, after he had scanned them.

"But she vows eternal constancy to him!" cried Henry; "says she shall ever love him! —says so at the time she professes devoted love for me! How can I trust her after that? Suffolk, I feel she does not love me exclusively; and my passion is so deep and devouring, that it demands entire return. I must have her heart as well as her person;

and I fear I have only won her in my quality of king."

"I am persuaded your majesty is mistaken," said the duke.

"Would I could think so!" sighed Henry. "But no—no, I cannot be deceived. I will conquer this fatal passion. Oh, Suffolk! it is frightful to be the bondslave of a woman—a fickle, inconstant woman. But between the depths of love and hate is but a step; and I can pass from one to the other."

"Do nothing rashly, my dear liege," said Suffolk; "nothing that may bring with it after-repentance. Do not be swayed by those who have inflamed your jealousy, and who could practise upon it. Think the matter calmly over, and then act. And till you have decided, see neither Catherine nor Anne; and, above all, do not admit Wolsey to your secret councils."

"You are his enemy, Suffolk," said the king, sternly.

"I am your majesty's friend," replied the duke. "Beseech you, yield to me on this occasion, and I am sure of your thanks hereafter."

"Well, I believe you are right, my good friend and brother," said Henry, "and I will curb my impulses of rage and jealousy. To-morrow, before I see either the queen or Anne, we will ride forth into the forest, and talk the matter further over."

"Your highness has come to a wise determination," said the duke.

"Oh, Suffolk!" sighed Henry, "would I had never seen this syren! She exercises a fearful control over me, and enslaves my very soul."

"I cannot say whether it is for good or ill that you have met, my dear liege,"

replied Suffolk, "but I fancy I can discern the way in which your ultimate decision will be taken. But it is now near midnight. I wish your majesty sound and untroubled repose."

"Stay!" cried Henry, "I am about to visit the Curfew Tower, and must take you with me. I will explain my errand as we go. I had some thought of sending you there in my stead." "Ha!" he exclaimed, glancing at his finger—"By Saint Paul! it is gone."

"What is gone, my liege?" asked Suffolk.

"My signet," replied Henry. "I missed it not till now. It has been wrested from me by the fiend during my walk from the Curfew Tower. Let us not lose a moment, or the prisoners will be set free by him,—if they have not been liberated already."

So saying, he took a couple of dags—a

species of short gun—from a rest on the wall, and giving one to Suffolk, thrust the other into his girdle. Thus armed, they quitted the royal lodgings, and hurried in the direction of the Curfew Tower. Just as they reached the Horse-Shoe Cloisters, the alarm bell began to ring.

"Did I not tell you so?" cried Henry, furiously; "they have escaped. Ha! it ceases!—what has happened?"

About a quarter of an hour after the king had quitted the Curfew Tower, a tall man, enveloped in a cloak, and wearing a high conical cap, presented himself to the arequebusier stationed at the entrance to the dungeon, and desired to be admitted to the prisoners.

"I have the king's signet," he said, holding forth the ring.

On seeing this, the arquebusier, who

recognised the ring, unlocked the door, and admitted him. Mabel was kneeling on the ground beside her grandsire, with her hands raised as in prayer, but as the tall man entered the vault, she started to her feet, and uttered a slight scream.

"What is the matter, child?" cried Tristram.

"He is here!—he is come!" cried Mabel, in a tone of the deepest terror.

"Who—the king!" cried Tristram, looking up. "Ah! I see! Herne is come to deliver me."

"Do not go with him, grandsire," cried Mabel. "In the name of all the saints, I implore you, do not."

"Silence her!" said Herne, in a harsh, imperious voice, "or I leave you."

The old man looked imploringly at his grand-daughter.

"You know the conditions of your liberation?" said Herne.

"I do—I do," replied Tristram, hastily, and with a shudder.

"Oh, grandfather!" cried Mabel, falling at his feet, "do not, I conjure you, make any conditions with this dreaded being, or it will be at the expense of your salvation. Better I should perish at the stake—better you should suffer the most ignominious death, than this should be."

"Do you accept them?" cried Herne, disregarding her supplications.

Tristram answered in the affirmative.

"Recall your words, grandfather—recall your words!" cried Mabel. "I will implore pardon for you on my knees from the king, and he will not refuse me."

"The pledge cannot be recalled, damsel," said Herne: "and it is to save you from

the king, as much as to accomplish his own preservation, that your grandsire consents. He would not have you a victim to Henry's lust." And as he spoke, he divided the forester's bonds with his knife. "You must go with him, Mabel," he added.

"I will not!" she cried. "Something warns me that a great danger awaits me."

"You *must* go, girl," cried Tristram, angrily. "I will not leave you to Henry's lawless passion."

Meanwhile, Herne had passed into one of the large embrasures, and opened, by means of a spring, an entrance to a secret staircase in the wall. He then beckoned Tristram towards him, and whispered some instructions in his ear.

"I understand," replied the old man.

"Proceed to the cave," cried Herne, "and remain there till I join you."

Tristram nodded assent.

"Come, Mabel!" he cried, advancing towards her, and seizing her hand.

"Away!" cried Herne, in a menacing tone.

Terrified by the formidable looks and gestures of the demon, the poor girl offered no resistance, and her grandfather drew her into the opening, which was immediately closed after her.

About an hour after this, and when it was near upon the stroke of midnight, the arquebusier who had admitted the tall stranger to the dungeon, and who had momentarily expected his coming forth, opened the door to see what was going forward. Great was his astonishment to find the cell empty! After looking around in bewilderment, he rushed to the chamber above, to tell his comrades what had happened.

"This is clearly the work of the fiend," said Shoreditch; "it is useless to strive against him."

"That tall black man was doubtless Herne himself," said Paddington. "I am glad he did us no injury. I hope the king will not provoke his malice further."

"Well, we must inform Captain Bouchier of the mischance," said Shoreditch. "I would not be in thy skin, Mat Bee, for a trifle. The king will be here presently, and then——"

"It is impossible to penetrate through the devices of the evil one," interrupted Mat. "I could have sworn it was the royal signet, for I saw it on the king's finger as he delivered the order. I wish such another chance of capturing the fiend would occur to me."

As the words were uttered, the door of a

recess was thrown suddenly open, and Herne, in his wild garb, with his antlered helm upon his brow, and the rusty chain depending from his left arm, stood before them. His appearance was so terrific and unearthly that they all shrank aghast, and Mat Bee fell with his face on the floor.

"I am here!" cried the demon. "Now, braggart, wilt dare to seize me?"

But not a hand was moved against him. The whole party seemed transfixed with terror.

"You dare not brave my power, and you are right," cried Herne—"a wave of my hand would bring this old tower about your ears,—a word would summon a legion of fiends to torment you."

"But do not utter it, I pray you, good Herne—excellent Herne," cried Mat Bee. "And, above all things, do not wave your

hand, for we have no desire to be buried alive,—have we, comrades? I should never have said what I did if I had thought your fiendship within hearing."

"Your royal master will as vainly seek to contend with me as he did to bury me beneath the oak tree," cried Herne. "If you want me further, seek me in the upper chamber."

And with these words, he darted up the ladder-like flight of steps, and disappeared.

As soon as they had recovered from the fright that had enchained them, Shoreditch and Paddington rushed forth into the area in front of the turret, and shouting to those on the roof, told them that Herne was in the upper room—a piece of information which was altogether superfluous, as the hammering had recommenced, and continued till the clock struck twelve, when it stopped. Just

then, it occurred to Mat Bee to ring the alarm bell, and he seized the rope, and began to pull it; but the bell had scarcely sounded, when the cord, severed from above, fell down upon his head.

At this juncture, the king and the Duke of Suffolk arrived. When told what had happened, though prepared for it, Henry burst into a terrible passion, and bestowed a buffet on Mat Bee, that well nigh broke his jaw, and sent him reeling to the further side of the chamber. He had not at first understood that Herne was supposed to be in the upper room; but as soon as he was made aware of the circumstance, he cried out—"Ah, dastards! have you let him brave you thus? But I am glad of it. His capture is reserved for my own hand."

"Do not expose yourself to this risk, my gracious liege," said Suffolk.

"What! are you too a sharer in their womanish fears, Suffolk?" cried Henry. "I thought you had been made of stouter stuff. If there is danger, I shall be the first to encounter it. Come!" he added, snatching a torch from an arquebusier. And, drawing his dag, he hurried up the steep steps, while Suffolk followed his example, and three or four arquebusiers ventured after them.

Meanwhile, Shoreditch and Paddington ran out, and informed Bouchier that the king had arrived, and was mounting in search of Herne, upon which the captain, shaking off his fears, ordered his men to follow him, and opening the little door at the top of the stairs, began cautiously to descend, feeling his way with his sword. He had got about half-way down, when Henry sprang upon the platform. The light of the torch fell upon the ghostly figure of

Herne, with his arms folded upon his breast, standing near the pile of wood, lying between the two staircases. So appalling was the appearance of the demon, that Henry stood still to gaze at him, while Bouchier and his men remained irresolute on the stairs. In another moment, the Duke of Suffolk had gained the platform, and the arquebusiers were seen near the head of the stairs.

"At last, thou art in my power, accursed being!" cried Henry. "Thou art hemmed in on all sides, and canst not escape!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Herne.

"This shall prove whether thou art human or not," cried Henry, taking deliberate aim at him with the dag.

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared Herne.

And as the report rang through the room, he sank through the floor, and disappeared from view.

"Gone!" exclaimed Henry, as the smoke cleared off; "gone! Holy Mary! then it must indeed be the fiend. I made the middle of his skull my aim, and if he had not been invulnerable, the bullet must have pierced his brain."

"I heard it rebound from his horned helmet, and drop to the floor," said Bouchier.

"What is that chest?" cried Henry, pointing to a strange coffin-shaped box, lying, as it seemed, on the exact spot where the demon had disappeared.

No one had seen it before, though all called to mind the mysterious hammering; and they had no doubt that the coffin was the work of the demon.

"Break it open!" cried Henry; "for aught we know, Herne may be concealed within it."

The order was reluctantly obeyed by the arquebusiers. But no force was required, for the lid was not nailed down; and when it was removed, a human body, in the last stage of decay, was discovered.

"Pah! close it up," cried Henry, turning away in disgust. "How came it there?"

"It must have been brought by the powers of darkness," said Bouchier; "no such coffin was here when I searched the chamber two hours ago. But see," he added, stooping down, and picking up a piece of paper which had fallen from the coffin, "here is a scroll."

"Give it me!" cried Henry; and holding it to the light, he read the words—"*The body of Mark Fytton, the butcher, —the victim of a tyrant's cruelty.*"

Uttering a terrible imprecation, Henry

flung the paper from him; and bidding the arquebusiers burn the body at the foot of the gallows without the town, he quitted the tower without further search.

XIII.

OW WOLSEY WAS DISGRACED BY THE KING.

On the following day, a reconciliation took place between the king and Anne Boleyn. During a ride in the Great Park with his royal brother, Suffolk not only convinced him of the groundlessness of his jealousy, but contrived to incense him strongly against Wolsey. Thus the queen and the cardinal lost the momentary advantage they had gained, while Anne's

power was raised yet higher. Yielding to her entreaties not to see Catherine again, nor to hold further conference with Wolsey until the sentence of the court should be pronounced, Henry left the castle that very day, and proceeded to his palace of Bridewell. The distress of the unhappy queen at this sudden revolution of affairs may be conceived. Distrusting Wolsey, and putting her sole reliance on Heaven and the goodness of her cause, she withdrew to Blackfriars, where she remained till the court met. As to the cardinal himself, driven desperate by his situation, and exasperated by the treatment he had experienced, he resolved, at whatever risk, to thwart Henry's schemes, and revenge himself upon Anne Boleyn.

Thus matters continued till the court met as before in the parliament-chamber, at

Blackfriars. On this occasion Henry was present, and took his place under a cloth of estate,—the queen sitting at some distance below him. Opposite them were the legates, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the whole of the bishops. The aspect of the assemblage was grave and anxious. Many eyes were turned on Henry, who looked gloomy and menacing, but the chief object of interest was the queen, who, though pale as death, had never in her highest days of power worn a more majestic and dignified air than on this occasion.

The proceedings of the court then commenced, and the king being called by the crier, he immediately answered to the summons. Catherine was next called, and, instead of replying, she marched towards the canopy beneath which the king was seated, prostrated herself, and poured forth a most

pathetic and eloquent appeal to him; at the close of which she arose, and, making a profound reverence, walked out of the court, leaning upon the arm of her general-receiver, Griffith. Henry desired the crier to call her back, but she would not return; and seeing the effect produced by her address upon the auditory, he endeavoured to efface it by an eulogium on her character and virtues, accompanied by an expression of deep regret at the step he was compelled to take in separating himself from her. But his hypocrisy availed him little, and his speech was received with looks of ill-disguised incredulity. Some further discourse then took place between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Rochester; but as the queen had absented herself, the court was adjourned to the next day, when it again met, and as she did not then appear,

though summoned, she was pronounced contumacious. After repeated adjournments, the last session was held, and judgment demanded on the part of the king, when Campeggio, as had been arranged between him and Wolsey, declined to pronounce it until he had referred the matter to the pope, and the court was dissolved.

About two months after this event, during which time the legates' commission had been revoked, while Henry was revolving the expediency of accomplishing the divorce through the medium of his own ecclesiastical courts, and without reference to that of Rome,—a dispatch was received from the pope by the two cardinals, requiring them to cite the king to appear before him by attorney on a certain day. At the time of the arrival of this instrument, Campeggio chanced to be staying with Wolsey at his

palace at Esher, and as the king was then holding his court at Windsor, they both set out for the castle on the following day, attended by a retinue of nearly a hundred horsemen, splendidly equipped.

It was now the middle of September, and the woods, instead of presenting one uniform mass of green, glowed with an infinite variety of lovely tints. And yet, despite the beauty of the scene, there was something melancholy in witnessing the decline of the year, as marked by those old woods, and by the paths that led through them, so thickly strewn with leaves. Wolsey was greatly affected. "These noble trees will ere long be reft of their glories," he thought—"and so, most likely, will it be with me—and perhaps my winter may come on sooner than theirs!"

The cardinal and his train had crossed

Staines Bridge; and, passing through Egham, had entered the Great Park, near Englefield Green. They were proceeding along the high ridge overlooking the woody region between it and the castle, when a joyous shout in the glades beneath reached them; and looking down, they saw the king, accompanied by Anne Boleyn, and attended by his falconers and a large company of horsemen, pursuing the sport of hawking. The royal party appeared so much interested in their sport, that they did not notice the cardinal and his train, and were soon out of sight. But as Wolsey descended Snow Hill, and entered the long avenue, he heard the trampling of horses at a little distance; and shortly afterwards, Henry and Anne issued from out the trees. They were somewhat more than a bow-shot in advance of the cardinal; but instead of halting till he

came up, the king had no sooner ascertained who it was, than, despatching a messenger to the castle, who was seen galloping swiftly down the avenue, he rode off with Anne Boleyn toward the opposite side of the park. Though deeply mortified by the slight, Wolsey concealed his vexation from his brother cardinal, and pursued his way to the castle, before which he presently arrived. The gate was thrown open at his approach, but he had scarcely entered the lower ward, when Sir Henry Norris, the king's groom of the stole, advanced to meet him, and, with a sorrowful expression of countenance, said that his royal master had so many guests at the castle, that he could not accommodate him and his train.

"I understand your drift, sir," replied Wolsey—"you would tell me I am not welcome. Well, then, his eminence Cardinal

Campeggio and myself must take up our lodging at some hostel in the town, for it is necessary we should see the king."

"If your grace is content to dismiss your attendants," said Norris, in a low tone, "you and Cardinal Campeggio can be lodged in Henry the Third's Tower. Thus much I will take upon me; but I dare not admit you to the royal lodgings."

Wolsey tried to look unconcerned, and calling to his gentleman usher, George Cavendish, gave him some instructions in a low voice, upon which the other immediately placed himself at the head of the retinue, and ordered them to quit the castle with him, leaving only the jester, Patch, to attend upon his master. Campeggio's attendants, being, comparatively speaking, few in number, were allowed to remain, and his litter was conveyed to Henry the Third's Tower—a

fortification standing, as already stated, in the south side of the lower ward, near the edge of the dry moat surrounding the Round Tower. At the steps of this tower Wolsey dismounted, and was about to follow Campeggio into the doorway, when Will Sommers, who had heard of his arrival, stepped forward, and with a salutation of mock formality, said—"I am sure it will grieve the king, my master, not to be able to accommodate your grace's train; but since it is larger than his own you will scarce blame his want of hospitality."

"Nor the courtesy of his attendants," rejoined Wolsey, sharply. "I am in no mood for thy jesting now. Stand aside, sirrah, or I will have the rod applied to thy back!"

"Take care the king does not apply the rod to your own, lord cardinal," retorted

Will Sommers. "If he scourges you according to your deserts, your skin will be redder than your robe." And his mocking laugh pursued Wolsey, like the hiss of a snake, into the tower.

Some two hours after this, Henry and his attendants returned from the chase. The king seemed in a blithe humour, and Wolsey saw him laugh heartily as Will Sommers pointed with his bauble towards Henry the Third's Tower. The cardinal received no invitation to the royal banquet; and the answer to his solicitation for an interview was, that he and Campeggio would be received in the presence-chamber on the following morning, but not before.

That night a great revel was held in the castle. Masquing, dancign, and feasting filled up the evening, and the joyous sounds and strains reached Wolsey in his seclusion,

and forced him to contrast it with his recent position, when he would have been second only to the king in the entertainment. He laid his head upon his pillow, but not to rest, and while tossing feverishly about his couch, he saw the arras with which the walls were covered move, and a tall, dark figure step from behind it. The cardinal would have awakened his jester, who slept in a small truckle-bed at his feet, but the strange visitor motioned him to be still.

"You may conjecture who I am, cardinal," he said, "but in case you should doubt, I will tell you. I am Herne the Hunter! And now to my errand. There is a damsel, whom you once saw in the forest near the great lake, and whom you promised to befriend. You can assist her now—to-morrow it may be out of your power."

"I have enough to do to aid myself, without meddling with what concerns me not," said Wolsey.

"This damsel *does* concern you," cried Herne. "Read this, and you will see in what way."

And he tossed a letter to Wolsey, who glanced at it by the light of the lamp.

"Ha! is it so?" he exclaimed. "Is she ——"

"Hush!" cried Herne, "or you will wake this sleeper. It is as you suppose. Will you not aid her now? Will you not bestow some of your treasure upon her before it is wholly wrested from you by the king? I will do aught you wish, secretly and swiftly."

"Go, then, to my palace at Esher," cried the cardinal. "Take this key to my treasurer—it is the key of my coffers. Bid

him deliver to you the six caskets in the cabinet in the gilt chamber. Here is a token by which he will know that you came from me," he added, delivering him a small chain of gold, "for it has been so agreed between us. But you will be sure to give the treasure to Mabel?"

"Fear nothing," replied Herne. And stretching forth his hand to receive the key and the chain, he glided behind the tapestry, and disappeared.

This strange incident gave some diversion to Wolsey's thoughts; but ere long they returned to their former channel. Sleep would not be summoned, and as soon as the first glimpse of day appeared, he arose, and wrapping his robe around him, left his room and ascended a winding staircase leading to the roof of the tower.

The morning promised to be fine, but it

was then hazy, and the greater part of the forest was wrapped in mist. The castle, however, was seen to great advantage. Above Wolsey rose the vast fabric of the Round Tower, on the summit of which the broad standard was at that moment being unfurled; while the different battlements and towers arose majestically around. But Wolsey's gaze rested chiefly upon the exquisite mausoleum lying immediately beneath him, in which he had partly prepared for himself a magnificent monument. A sharp pang shook him as he contemplated it, and he cried aloud—"My very tomb will be wrested from me by this rapacious monarch; and after all my care, and all my cost, I know not where I shall rest my bones!"

Saddened by the reflection, he descended to his chamber, and again threw himself on the couch.

But Wolsey was not the only person in the castle who had passed a sleepless night. Of the host of his enemies many had been kept awake by the anticipation of his downfal on the morrow; and among these was Anne Boleyn, who had received an assurance from the king that her enmity should at length be fully gratified.

At the appointed hour, the two cardinals proceeded to the royal lodgings. They were detained for some time in the antechamber, where Wolsey was exposed to the taunts and sneers of the courtiers, who had lately so servilely fawned upon him. At length, they were ushered into the presence-chamber, at the upper end of which, beneath a canopy emblazoned with the royal arms woven in gold, sat Henry, with Anne Boleyn on his right hand. At the foot of the throne stood Will Sommers, and near him

the Dukes of Richmond and Suffolk. Norfolk, Rochford, and a number of other nobles, all open enemies of Wolsey, were likewise present. Henry watched the advance of the cardinals with a stern look, and after they had made an obeisance to him, he motioned them to rise.

"You have sought an interview with me, my lords," he said, with suppressed rage. "What would you?"

"We have brought an instrument to you, my liege," said Wolsey, "which has just been received from his holiness the pope."

"Declare its nature," said Henry.

"It is a citation," replied Wolsey, "enjoining your highness to appear by attorney in the papal court, under a penalty of ten thousand ducats."

And he presented a parchment, stamped with the great seal of Rome, to the king,

who glanced his eye fiercely over it, and then dashed it to the ground, with an explosion of fury terrible to hear and to witness.

"Ha! by Saint George!" he cried; "am I as nothing that the pope dares to insult me thus?"

"It is a mere judicial form, your majesty," interposed Campeggio; "and is chiefly sent by his holiness to let you know we have no further jurisdiction in the matter of the divorce."

"I will take care you have not, nor his holiness either," roared the king. "By my father's head! he shall find I will be no longer trifled with."

"But, my liege——"cried Campeggio.

"Peace!" cried the king. "I will hear no apologies nor excuses. The insult has been offered, and cannot be effaced. As for you, Wolsey——"

" Sire!" exclaimed the cardinal, shrinking before the whirlwind of passion, which seemed to menace his utter extermination.

" As for you, I say," pursued Henry, extending his hand towards him, while his eyes flashed fire, " who by your outrageous pride have so long overshadowed our honour, —who by your insatiate avarice and appetite for wealth have oppressed our subjects, —who by your manifold acts of bribery and extortion have impoverished our realm, and by your cruelty and partiality have subverted the due course of justice, and turned it to your own ends,—the time is come when you shall receive due punishment for your offences."

" You wrong me, my dear liege," cried Wolsey, abjectly. " These are the accusations of my enemies. Grant me a patient hearing, and I will explain all."

" I would not sharpen the king's resent-

ment against you, lord cardinal," said Anne Boleyn, "for it is keen enough; but I cannot permit you to say that these charges are merely hostile. Those who would support the king's honour and dignity must desire to see you removed from his councils."

"I am ready to take thy place, lord cardinal," said Will Sommers; "and will exchange my bauble for thy chancellor's mace, and my fool's cap for thy cardinal's hat."

"Peace!" thundered the king. "Stand not between me and the object of my wrath. Your accusers are not one, but many, Wolsey; nay, the whole of my people cry out for justice against you. And they shall have it. But you shall hear the charges they bring. Firstly, contrary to our prerogative, and for your own advancement and profit, you have obtained authority legatine from

the pope; by which authority you have not only spoiled and taken away their substance from many religious houses, but have usurped much of our own jurisdiction. You have also made a treaty with the King of France for the pope without our consent, and concluded another friendly treaty with the Duke of Ferrara, under our great seal, and in our name, without our warrant. And, furthermore, you have presumed to couple yourself with our royal self in your letters and instructions, as if you were on equality with us."

"Ha! ha! 'The king and I would have you do thus!' 'The king and I give you our hearty thanks!' Ran it not so, cardinal?" cried Will Sommers. "You will soon win the cap and bells."

"In exercise of your legatine authority," pursued the king, "you have given away

benefices contrary to our crown and dignity, for the which you are in danger of forfeiture of your lands and goods."

"A premunire, cardinal," cried Will Sommers. "A premunire!—ha! ha!"

"Then it has been your practice to receive all the ambassadors to our court first at your own palace," continued Henry,—"to hear their charges and intentions, and to instruct them as you might see fit. You have also so practised that all our letters sent from beyond sea have first come to your own hands, by which you have acquainted yourself with their contents, and compelled us and our council to follow your devices. You have also written to all our ambassadors abroad in your own name concerning our affairs, without our authority; and received letters in return from them by which you have sought to compass your own purposes. By

your ambition and pride you have undone many of our poor subjects; have suppressed religious houses, and received their possessions; have seized upon the goods of wealthy spiritual men deceased; constrained all ordinaries yearly to compound with you; have gotten riches for yourself and servants by subversion of the laws, and by abuse of your authority in causing divers pardons of the pope to be suspended until you, by promise of a yearly pension, chose to revive them; and also by crafty and untrue tales have sought to create dissension among our nobles."

"That we can all avouch for," cried Suffolk. "It was never merry in England while there were cardinals among us."

"Of all men in England your grace should be the last to say so," rejoined Wolsey; "for if I had not been cardinal, you would not have

had a head upon your shoulders to utter the taunt."

"No more of this!" cried the king. "You have misdemeaned yourself in our court by keeping up as great state in our absence as if we had been there in person; and presumptuously have dared to join and imprint your badge—the cardinal's hat, under our arms, graven on our coins struck at York. And lastly—whenever in open parliament allusion hath been made to heresies and erroneous sects, you have failed to correct and notice them, to the danger of the whole body of good and Christian people of this our realm."

"This last charge ought to win me favour in the eyes of one who professes the opinions of Luther," said Wolsey, to Anne. "But I deny it, as I do all the rest."

"I will listen to no defence, Wolsey," re-

plied the king. "I will make you a terrible example to others how they offend us and our laws hereafter."

"Do not condemn me unheard!" cried the cardinal, prostrating himself.

"I have heard too much; and I will hear no more!" cried the king, fiercely. "I dismiss you from my presence for ever. If you are innocent, as you aver, justice will be done you. If you are guilty, as I believe you to be, look not for leniency from me, for I will shew you none."

And, seating himself, he turned to Anne, in a low tone, "Are you content, sweetheart?"

"I am," she replied. "I shall not now break my vow. False cardinal!" she added aloud, "your reign is at an end."

"Your own may not be much longer, madam," rejoined Wolsey, bitterly. "The

shadow of the axe," he added, pointing to the reflection of a partisan on the floor, "is at your feet. Ere long it may rise to the head."

And, accompanied by Campeggio, he slowly quitted the presence-chamber.

Thus ends the Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Windsor Castle.

WINDSOR CASTLE.

Book the Fifth.

MABEL LYNDWOOD.

I.

HOW THE EARL OF SURREY AND THE FAIR GERALDINE MET IN KING JAMES'S BOWER IN THE MOAT; AND HOW THEY WERE SURPRISED BY THE DUKE OF RICHMOND.

In order to preserve unbroken the chain of events with which the third book of this chronicle concluded, it was deemed expedient to disturb the unity of time, so far as it related to some of the less important characters; and it will now be necessary, therefore, to return to the middle of June, when

the Earl of Surrey's term of captivity was drawing to a close.

As the best means of conquering the anxiety produced by the vision exhibited to him by Herne, increased as it was by the loss of the relic he had sustained at the same time, the earl had devoted himself to incessant study, and for a whole month he remained within his chamber. The consequence of his unremitting application was, that though he succeeded in his design, and completely regained his tranquillity, his strength gave way under the effort, and he was confined for some days to his couch by a low fever.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to venture forth, he mounted to the summit of the Round Tower, in the hope that a walk round its breezy battlements might conduce to his restoration to health. The

day was bright and beautiful, and a gentle wind was stirring; and as Surrey felt the breath of heaven upon his cheek, and gazed upon the glorious prospect before him, he wondered that his imprisonment had not driven him mad. Everything around him, indeed, was calculated to make the sense of captivity painful. The broad and beautiful meads, stretching out beneath him, seemed to invite a ramble over them,—the silver river courted a plunge into its waves,—the woods an hour's retirement into their shady recesses. The bells of Eton college rang out merrily, but their sound saddened, rather than elated him. The road between Eton and Windsor, then marked by straggling cottages with gardens between them, with here and there a dwelling of a better kind, was thronged with herds of cattle and their drivers, for a fair was held that day in the

town of Windsor, to which they were hastening. Then there were country maidens and youthful hinds in their holiday apparel, trooping towards the bridge. Booths were erected, near which in the Brocas meads, the rustic sports of wrestling, running, and casting the bar, were going forward; while numbers of boats shot to and fro upon the river, and strains of music proceeded from a large gilt barge moored to its banks. Nearer, and in the broad green plain lying beneath the north terrace, were a company of archers, shooting at the butts. But these sights, instead of affording pleasure to Surrey, only sharpened the anguish of his feelings by the contrast they offered to his present position.

To distract his thoughts, he quitted the near view, and let his eye run along the edge of the horizon, until it rested upon a

small speck, which he knew to be the lofty spire of Saint Paul's cathedral. If, as he supposed, the fair Geraldine was in attendance upon Anne Boleyn, at the palace at Bridewell, she must be under the very shadow of this very spire; and the supposition, whether correct or not, produced such quick and stifling emotions, that the tears rushed to his eyes.

Ashamed of his weakness, he turned to the other side of the tower, and bent his gaze upon the woody heights of the Great Park. These recalled Herne the Hunter; and burning with resentment at the tricks practised upon him by the demon, he determined that the first use he would make of his liberty should be to seek out, and, if possible, effect the capture of the mysterious being. Some of the strange encounters between Herne and the king had been related

to him by the officer on guard at the Norman Tower; but these only served as stimulants to the adventure. After a couple of hours thus passed on the keep, he descended, refreshed and invigorated. The next day he was there again, and the day after that; when, feeling that his restoration was well-nigh complete, he requested permission to pass the following evening in the dry moat of the donjon. And this was readily accorded him.

Covered with green sod, and shaded by many tall trees, growing out of the side of the artificial mound on which the keep was built, the fosse offered all the advantages of a garden to the prisoners who were allowed to take exercise within it. Here, as has been mentioned, King James the First of Scotland first beheld, from the battlements above, the lovely Jane Beaufort take her

solitary walk, and by his looks and gestures contrived to make her sensible of the passion with which she inspired him; and here at last, in an arbour which, for the sake of the old and delightful legend connected with it, was kept up at the time of this chronicle, and then bore the name of the royal poet, they had secretly met, and interchanged their vows of affection.

Familiar with the story, familiar also with the poetic strains to which the monarch's passion gave birth, Surrey could not help comparing his own fate with that of the illustrious captive who had visited the spot before him. Full of such thoughts, he pensively tracked the narrow path winding between the grassy banks of the fosse—now casting up his eyes to the keep—now looking towards the arbour, and wishing that he had been favoured with such visitings as

lightened the captivity of the Scottish king. At last he sought the bower—a charming little nest of green leaves and roses, sheltering a bench which seemed only contrived for lovers—and taking out his tablets, began to trace within them some stanzas of that exquisite poem which has linked his name for ever with the Round Tower. Thus occupied, the time stole on insensibly, and he was not aware that he had overstayed the limits allowed him, till he was roused by the voice of the officer, who came to summon him back to his prison.

"You will be removed to your old lodging in the Round Tower to-morrow night, my lord," said the officer.

"For what reason?" demanded the earl, as he followed his conductor up the steep side of the mound. But receiving no reply, he did not renew the inquiry.

Entering a door in the covered way at the head of the flight of steps communicating with the Norman Tower, they descended them in silence. Just as they reached the foot of this long staircase, the earl chanced to cast back his eyes, and to his inexpressible astonishment, perceived on the landing at the head of the steps, and just before the piece of ordnance commanding the ascent, the figure of Herne the Hunter.

Before he could utter an exclamation, the figure retreated through the adjoining archway. Telling the officer what he had seen, Surrey would fain have gone in quest of the fiendish spy; but the other would not permit him; and affecting to treat the matter as a mere creation of fancy, he hurried the earl to his chamber in the Curfew Tower.

The next day, Surrey was removed betimes to the Round Tower, and the cause of

the transfer was soon explained by the discharge of ordnance, the braying of trumpets, and the rolling of drums, announcing the arrival of the king. From the mystery observed towards him, Surrey was led to the conclusion that the fair Geraldine accompanied the royal party; but he in vain sought to satisfy himself of the truth of this surmise by examining, through the deep embrasure of his window, the cavalcade that soon afterwards entered the upper quadrangle. Amid the throng of beautiful dames surrounding Anne Boleyn he could not be certain that he detected the fair Geraldine; but he readily distinguished the Duke of Richmond among the nobles, and the sight awakened a pang of bitter jealousy in his breast.

The day wore away slowly, for he could not fix his attention upon his books, neither was he allowed to go forth upon the

battlements of the tower. In the evening, however, the officer informed him he might take exercise within the dry moat if he was so inclined, and he gladly availed himself of the permission.

After pacing to and fro along the walk for a short time, he entered the arbour, and was about to throw himself upon the bench, when he observed a slip of paper lying upon it. He took it up, and found a few lines traced upon it in hurried characters. They ran thus :—

" The fair Geraldine arrived this morning in the castle. If the Earl of Surrey desires to meet her, he will find her within this arbour at midnight."

This billet was read and re-read by the young earl with feelings of indescribable transport; but a little reflection damped his ardour, and made him fear it might be

a device to ensnare him. There was no certainty that the note proceeded in any way from the fair Geraldine, nor could he even be sure that she was in the castle. Still, despite these misgivings, the attraction was too powerful to be resisted, and he turned over the means of getting out of his chamber, but the scheme seemed wholly impracticable. The window was at a considerable height above the ramparts of the keep, and even if he could reach them, and escape the notice of the sentinels, he should have to make a second descent into the fosse. And supposing all this accomplished, how was he to return? The impossibility of answering this latter mental interrogation compelled him to give up all idea of the attempt.

On returning to his prison-chamber, he stationed himself at the embrasure overlooking the ramparts, and listened to the regular

tread of the sentinel below, half resolved, be the consequences what they might, to descend. As the appointed time approached, his anxiety became almost intolerable, and quitting the window, he began to pace hurriedly to and fro within the chamber, which, as has been previously observed, partook of the circular form of the keep, and was supported in certain places by great wooden pillars and cross beams. But instead of dissipating his agitation, his rapid movements seemed rather to increase it, and at last, wrought to a pitch of uncontrollable excitement, he cried aloud—"If the fiend were to present himself now, and to offer to lead me to her, I would follow him."

Scarcely were the words uttered than a hollow laugh broke from the further end of the chamber, and a deep voice exclaimed—"I am ready to take you to her."

"I need not ask who addresses me," said

Surrey, after a pause, and straining his eyes to distinguish the figure of the speaker in the gloom.

"I will tell you who I am," rejoined the other. "I am he who visited you once before—who shewed you a vision of the fair Geraldine,—and carried off your vaunted relic,—ho! ho!"

"Avoid thee, false fiend!" rejoined Surrey, "thou temptest me now in vain."

"You have summoned me," returned Herne; "and I will not be dismissed. I am ready to convey you to your mistress, who awaits you in King James's bower, and marvels at your tardiness."

"And with what design dost thou offer me this service?" demanded Surrey.

"It will be time enough to put that question when I make any condition," replied Herne. "Enough, I am willing to aid you. Will you go?"

"Lead on!" replied Surrey, marching towards him.

Suddenly, Herne drew a lantern from beneath the cloak in which he was wrapped, and threw its light on a trap-door lying open at his feet.

"Descend!" he cried.

Surrey hesitated a moment, and then plunged down the steps. In another instant, the demon followed. Some hidden machinery was then set in motion, and the trap-door returned to its place. At length, Surrey arrived at a narrow passage, which appeared to correspond in form with the bulwarks of the keep. Here Herne passed him, and taking the lead, hurried along the gallery and descended another flight of steps, which brought them to a large vault, apparently built in the foundation of the tower. Before the earl had time to gaze round this chamber, the demon masked the

lantern, and taking his hand, drew him through a narrow passage terminated by a small iron door, which flew open at a touch, and they emerged among the bushes clothing the side of the mound.

"You can now proceed without my aid," said Herne; "but take care not to expose yourself to the sentinels."

Keeping under the shade of the trees, for the moon was shining brightly, Surrey hastened towards the arbour, and as he entered it, to his inexpressible delight found that he had not been deceived, but that the fair Geraldine was indeed there.

"How did you contrive this meeting?" she cried, after their first greetings had passed—"and how did you learn I was in the castle? for the strictest instructions were given that the tidings should not reach you."

The only response made by Surrey was to press her lily hand devotedly to his lips.

"I should not have ventured hither," pursued the fair Geraldine, "unless you had sent me the relic as a token. I knew you would never part with it, and I therefore felt sure there was no deception."

"But how did you get here?" inquired Surrey.

"Your messenger provided a rope-ladder, by which I descended in the moat," she replied.

Surrey was stupified.

"You seem astonished at my resolution," she continued; "and, indeed, I am surprised at it myself; but I could not overcome my desire to see you, especially as this meeting may be our last. The king, through the Lady Anne Boleyn, has positively enjoined me to think no more of you, and

has given your father, the Duke of Norfolk, to understand that your marriage without the royal assent will be attended by the loss of all the favour he now enjoys."

"And think you I will submit to such tyranny?" cried Surrey.

"Alas!" replied the fair Geraldine, in a mournful tone, "I feel we shall never be united. This conviction, which has lately forced itself upon my mind, has not made me love you less, though it has in some degree altered my feelings towards you."

"But I may be able to move the king!" cried Surrey. "I have some claim besides that of kindred on the Lady Anne Boleyn, and she will obtain his consent."

"Do not trust to her," replied the fair Geraldine. "You may have rendered her an important service, but be not too sure of a return. No, Surrey, I here release you

from the troth you plighted to me in the cloisters."

"I will not be released from it!" cried the earl, hastily; "neither will I release you. I hold the pledge as sacred and as binding as if we had been affianced together before Heaven!"

"For your own sake do not say so, my dear lord," rejoined the fair Geraldine; "beseech you, do not. That your heart is bound to me now, I well believe—and that you could become inconstant I will not permit myself to suppose. But your youth forbids an union between us for many years—and if during that time you should behold some fairer face than mine, or should meet some heart you may conceive more loving,—though that can hardly be,—I would not have a hasty vow restrain you. Be free, then—free at least for three years—and if at the

end of that time your affections are still unchanged, I am willing you should bind yourself to me for ever."

"I cannot act with equal generosity to you," rejoined Surrey, in a tone of deep disappointment. "I would sooner part with life than relinquish the pledge I have received from you. But I am content that my constancy should be put to the test you propose. During the long term of my probation, I will shrink from no trial of faith. Throughout Europe I will proclaim your beauty in the lists, and will maintain its supremacy against all comers. But, oh! sweet Geraldine, since we have met in this spot, hallowed by the loves of James of Scotland and Jane Beaufort, let us here renew our vows of eternal constancy, and agree to meet again at the time you have

appointed, with hearts as warm and loving as those we bring together now."

And as he spoke, he drew her towards him, and imprinted a passionate kiss on her lips.

"Let that ratify the pledge," he said.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed a deep voice without.

"What was that?" demanded the fair Geraldine, in a tone of alarm.

"You have the relic, have you not?" inquired the earl, in a low tone.

"No," she replied, "your messenger merely shewed it to me. But why do you ask? Ah! I understand. The fiendish laughter that just now sounded in my ears proceeded from ——"

"Herne the Hunter," replied Surrey, in a whisper. "But fear nothing. I will de-

fend you with my life. Ah! accursed chance! I have no weapon."

"None would avail against him," murmured the fair Geraldine. "Lead me forth; I shall die if I stay here."

Supporting her in his arms, Surrey complied, but they had scarcely gained the entrance of the arbour, when a tall figure stood before them. It was the Duke of Richmond. A gleam of moonlight penetrating through the leaves, fell upon the group, and rendered them distinctly visible to each other.

"Soh!" exclaimed the duke, after regarding the pair in silence for a moment, "I have not been misinformed. You have contrived a meeting here."

"Richmond!" said Surrey, sternly, "we once were dear and loving friends, and we are still honourable foes. I know that I

am safe with you. I know you will breathe no word about this meeting, either to the fair Geraldine's prejudice or mine."

"You judge me rightly, my lord," replied the duke, in a tone of equal sternness. "I have no thought of betraying you; though, by a word to my royal father, I could prevent all chance of future rivalry on your part. I shall, however, demand a strict account from you on your liberation."

"Your grace acts as beseems a loyal gentleman," replied Surrey. "Hereafter I will not fail to account to you for my conduct in any way you please."

"Oh! let me interpose between you, my lords," cried the fair Geraldine, "to prevent the disastrous consequences of this quarrel. I have already told your grace I cannot love you—and that my heart is devoted to the Earl of Surrey. Let me appeal

to your noble nature—to your generosity —not to persist in a hopeless suit."

"You have conquered, madam," said the uke, after a pause. "I have been to blame in this matter. But I will make amends for my error. Surrey, I relinquish her to you."

"My friend!" exclaimed the earl, casting himself into the duke's arms.

"I will now endeavour to heal the wounds I have unwittingly occasioned," said the fair Geraldine. "I am surprised your grace should be insensible to attractions so far superior to mine as those of the Lady Mary Howard."

"The Lady Mary is very beautiful, I confess," said the duke; "and if you had not been in the way, I should assuredly have been her captive."

"I ought not to betray the secret, per-

haps," hesitated the fair Geraldine, "but gratitude prompts me to do so. The lady is not so blind to your grace's merits as I have been."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the duke. "If it be so, Surrey, we may yet be brothers as well as friends."

"And that it is so I can avouch, Richmond," rejoined the earl, "for I am in my sister's secret as well as the fair Geraldine. But now that this explanation has taken place, I must entreat your grace to conduct the fair Geraldine back to her lodgings, while I regain, the best way I can, my chamber in the Round Tower."

"I marvel how you escaped from it," said Richmond; "but I suppose it was by the connivance of the officer."

"He who set me free—who brought the fair Geraldine hither—and who, I suspect,

acquainted you with our meeting, was no other than Herne the Hunter," replied Surrey.

"You amaze me!" exclaimed the duke; "it was indeed a tall dark man, muffled in a cloak, who informed me that you were to meet at midnight in King James's bower in the moat, and I therefore came to surprise you."

"Your informant was Herne," replied Surrey.

"Right!" exclaimed the demon, stepping from behind a tree, where he had hitherto remained concealed; "it was I—I, Herne the Hunter. And I contrived the meeting in anticipation of a far different result from that which has ensued. But I now tell you, my lord of Surrey, that it is idle to indulge a passion for the fair Geraldine. You will never wed her."

"False fiend!" thou liest, cried Surrey.

"Time will shew," replied Herne. "I repeat, you will wed another—and more, I tell you, you are blinder than Richmond has shewn himself,—for the most illustrious damsel in the kingdom has regarded you with eyes of affection, and yet you have not perceived it."

"The Princess Mary?" demanded Richmond.

"Ay, the Princess Mary," repeated Herne. "How say you now, my lord?—will you let ambition usurp the place of love?"

"No," replied Surrey. "But I will hold no further converse with thee. Thou wouldst tempt to perdition. Hence, fiend!"

"Unless you trust yourself to my guidance you will never reach your chamber," rejoined Herne, with a mocking laugh. "The iron door in the mound cannot be

opened on this side, and you well know what the consequence of a discovery will be. Come, or I leave you to your fate." And he moved down the path on the right.

"Go with him, Surrey," cried Richmond.

Pressing the fair Geraldine to his breast, the earl committed her to the charge of his friend, and tearing himself away, followed the steps of the demon. He had not proceeded far when he heard his name pronounced by a voice issuing from the tree above him. Looking up, he beheld Herne in one of the topmost branches, and at a sign instantly climbed up to him. The thick foliage screened them from observation, and Surrey concluded his guide was awaiting the disappearance of the sentinel, who was at that moment approaching the tree. But such apparently was not the other's intentions; for the man had scarcely passed than Herne sprang upon the ramparts, and the poor fellow turning at the

sound, was scared almost out of his senses at the sight of the dreaded fiend. Dropping his halbert, he fell upon his face with a stifled cry. Herne then motioned Surrey to descend, and they marched together quickly to a low door opening into the keep. Passing through it, and ascending a flight of steps, they stood upon the landing at the top of the staircase communicating with the Norman tower, and adjoining the entrance to Surrey's chamber.

Apparently familiar with the spot, Herne took down a large key from a nail in the wall, against which it hung, and unlocked the door.

"Enter!" he said to Surrey, "and do not forget the debt you owe to Herne the Hunter."

And as the earl stepped into the chamber, the door was locked behind him.

II.

HOW SIR THOMAS WYAT FOUND MABEL IN THE SANDSTONE CAVE;—AND WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM THERE.

A WEEK after the foregoing occurrence, the Earl of Surrey was set free. But his joy at regaining his liberty was damped by learning that the fair Geraldine had departed for Ireland. She had left the tenderest messages for him with his sister, the Lady Mary Howard, accompanied with assurances of unalterable attachment.

But other changes had taken place, which were calculated to afford him some consolation. Ever since the night on which he had been told that the Lady Mary was not indifferent to him, Richmond had devoted himself entirely to her; and matters had already proceeded so far, that he had asked her in marriage of the Duke of Norfolk, who, after ascertaining the king's pleasure on the subject, had gladly given his consent, and the youthful pair were affianced to each other. Surrey and Richmond now became closer friends than ever; and if, amid the thousand distractions of Henry's gay and festive court, the young earl did not forget the fair Geraldine, he did not, at least, find the time hang heavily on his hands.

About a week after Wolsey's dismissal, while the court was still sojourning at Windsor, Surrey proposed to Richmond, to

ride one morning with him in the Great Park. The duke willingly assented, and mounting their steeds, they galloped towards Snow Hill, wholly unattended. While mounting this charming ascent at a more leisurely pace, the earl said to his companion—"I will now tell you why I proposed this ride to you, Richmond. I have long determined to follow up the adventure of Herne the Hunter, and I wish to confer with you about it, and ascertain whether you are disposed to join me."

"I know not what to say, Surrey," replied the Duke, gravely, and speaking in a low tone; "the king, my father, failed in his endeavours to expel the demon, who still lords it in the forest."

"The greater glory to us if we succeed," said Surrey.

"I will take counsel with the Lady Mary

on the subject before I give an answer," rejoined Richmond.

"Then there is little doubt what your grace's decision will be," laughed Surrey. "To speak truth, it was the fear of your consulting her that made me bring you here. What say you to a ride in the forest to-morrow night?"

"I have little fancy for it," replied Richmond; "and if you will be ruled by me, you will not attempt the enterprise yourself."

"My resolution is taken," said the earl; "but now, since we have reached the brow of the hill, let us push forward to the lake."

A rapid ride of some twenty minutes brought them to the edge of the lake, and they proceeded along the verdant path leading to the forester's hut. On arriving at

the dwelling, it appeared wholly deserted, but they nevertheless dismounted, and tying their horses to the trees at the back of the cottage, entered it. While they were examining the lower room, the plash of oars reached their ears, and rushing to the window, they descried the skiff rapidly approaching the shore. A man was seated within it, whose attire, though sombre, seemed to proclaim him of some rank, but as his back was towards them, they could not discern his features. In another instant, the skiff touched the strand, and the rower leaping ashore, proved to be Sir Thomas Wyat. On making this discovery they both ran out to him, and the warmest greetings passed between them. When these were over, Surrey expressed his surprise to Wyat at seeing him there, declaring

he was wholly unaware of his return from the court of France.

"I came back about a month ago," said Wyat. "His majesty supposes me at Allington; nor shall I return to court without a summons."

"I am not sorry to hear it," said Surrey; "but what are you doing here?"

"My errand is a strange and adventurous one," replied Wyat. "You may have heard that before I departed for France, I passed some days in the forest in company with Herne the Hunter. What then happened to me I may not disclose; but I have vowed never to rest till I have freed this forest from the weird being who troubles it."

"Say you so!" cried Surrey; "then you are most fortunately encountered, Sir

Thomas, for I myself, as Richmond will tell you, am equally bent upon the fiend's expulsion. We will be companions in the adventure."

"We will speak of that anon," replied Wyat. "I was sorry to find this cottage uninhabited, and the fair damsel who dwelt within it, when I beheld it last, gone. What has become of her?"

"It is a strange story," said Richmond. And he proceeded to relate all that was known to have befallen Mabel.

Wyat listened with profound attention to the recital, and at its close, said—"I think I can find a clue to this mystery, but to obtain it I must go alone. Meet me here at midnight to-morrow, and I doubt not we shall be able to accomplish our design."

"May I not ask for some explanation of your scheme?" said Surrey.

"Not yet," rejoined Wyat. "But I will freely confess to you that there is much danger in the enterprise—danger that I would not willingly any one should share with me, especially you, Surrey, to whom I owe so much. If you do not find me here, therefore, to-morrow night, conclude that I have perished, or am captive."

"Well, be it as you will, Wyat," said Surrey; "but I would gladly accompany you, and share your danger."

"I know it, and I thank you," returned Wyat, warmly grasping the other's hand; "but much—nay, all may remain to be done to-morrow night. You had better bring some force with you, for we may need it."

"I will bring half a dozen stout archers," replied Surrey—"and if you come not, depend upon it, I will either release you or avenge you."

"I did not intend to prosecute this adventure further," said Richmond; "but since you are both resolved to embark in it, I will not desert you."

Soon after this, the friends separated,—Surrey and Richmond taking horse and returning to the castle, discoursing on the unlooked-for meeting with Wyat, while the latter again entered the skiff, and rowed down the lake. As soon as the hut was clear, two persons descended the steps of a ladder leading to a sort of loft in the roof, and sprang upon the floor of the hut.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the foremost, whose antlered helm and wild garb proclaimed him to be Herne, "they little dreamed who were the hearers of their conference. So they think to take me, Fenwolf—ha!"

"They know not whom they have to deal with," rejoined the latter.

"They *should* do so by this time," said Herne; "but I will tell thee why Sir Thomas Wyat has undertaken this enterprise. It is not to capture me, though that may be one object that moves him. But he wishes to see Mabel Lyndwood. The momentary glimpse he caught of her bright eyes was sufficient to inflame him."

"Ah!" exclaimed Fenwolf; "think you so?"

"I am assured of it," replied Herne. "He knows the secret of the cave, and will find her there."

"But he will never return to tell what he has seen," said Fenwolf, moodily.

"I know not that," replied Herne. "I have my own views respecting him. I want to renew my band."

"He will never join you," rejoined Fenwolf.

"What if I offer him Mabel as a bait?" said Herne.

"You will not do so, dread master?" rejoined Fenwolf, trembling and turning pale. "She belongs to me."

"To thee, fool!" cried Herne, with a derisive laugh. "Thinkest thou I would resign such a treasure to thee? No, no. But rest easy, I will not give her to Wyat."

"You mean her for yourself, then?" said Fenwolf.

"Darest thou to question me!" cried Herne, striking him with the hand armed with the iron gyves. "This to teach thee respect!"

"And this to prove whether thou art mortal or not!" rejoined Fenwolf, plucking his hunting-knife from his belt, and striking it with all his force against the other's breast.

But though surely and forcibly dealt, the blow glanced off as if the demon were cased in steel, and the intended assassin fell back in amazement, while an unearthly laugh rang in his ears. Never had Fenwolf seen Herne wear so formidable a look as he at that moment assumed. His giant frame dilated; his eyes flashed fire; and the expression of his countenance was so fearful that Fenwolf shielded his eyes with his hands.

"Ah! miserable dog!" thundered Herne; "dost thou think I am to be hurt by mortal hands, or mortal weapons? Thy former experience should have taught thee differently. But since thou hast provoked it, take thy fate."

Uttering these words, he seized Fenwolf by the throat, clutching him with a terrific gripe, and in a few seconds the miserable wretch would have paid the penalty of his

rashness, if a person had not at the moment appeared at the doorway. Flinging his prey hastily backwards, Herne turned at the interruption, and perceived old Tristram Lyndwood, who looked appalled at what he beheld.

"Ah! it is thou, Tristram," cried Herne; "thou art just in time to witness the punishment of this rebellious hound."

"Spare him, dread master!—oh, spare him!" cried Tristram, imploringly.

"Well," said Herne, gazing at the half-strangled caitiff, "he may live. He will not offend again. But why hast thou ventured from thy hiding-place, Tristram?"

"I came to inform you that I have just observed a person row across the lake in the skiff," replied the old man. "He appears to be taking the direction of the secret entrance to the cave."

"It is Sir Thomas Wyat," replied Herne; "I am aware of his proceedings. Stay with Fenwolf till he is able to move, and then proceed with him to the cave. But mark me, no violence must be done to Wyat if you find him there. Any neglect of my orders in this respect will be followed by severe punishment. I shall be at the cave ere long; but, meanwhile, I have other business to transact."

And quitting the hut, he plunged into the wood.

Meanwhile, Sir Thomas Wyat having crossed the lake, landed, and fastened the skiff to a tree, struck into the wood, and presently reached the open space in which lay the secret entrance to the cave. He was not long in finding the stone, though it was so artfully concealed by the brushwood that it would have escaped any uninstructed eye,

and removing it, the narrow entrance to the cave was revealed.

Committing himself to the protection of Heaven, Wyat entered, and having taken the precaution of drawing the stone after him, which was easily accomplished by a handle fixed to the inner side of it, he commenced the descent. At first, he had to creep along, but the passage gradually got higher, until at length, on reaching the level ground, he was able to stand upright. There was no light to guide him, but by feeling against the sides of the passage, he found that he was in the long gallery he had formerly threaded. Uncertain which way to turn, he determined to trust to chance for taking the right direction, and drawing his sword, proceeded slowly to the right.

For some time, he encountered no obstacle, neither could he detect the slightest

sound, but he perceived that the atmosphere grew damp, and that the sides of the passage were covered with moisture. Thus warned, he proceeded with greater caution —and presently found, after emerging into a more open space, and striking off on the left, that he had arrived at the edge of the pool of water which he knew lay at the end of the large cavern.

While considering how he should next proceed, a faint gleam of light became visible at the upper end of the vault. Changing his position, for the pillars prevented him from seeing the source of the glimmer, he discovered that it issued from a lamp borne by a female hand, who he had no doubt was Mabel. On making this discovery, he sprang forwards, and called to her, but instantly repented his rashness, for as he uttered the cry the light was extinguished.

Wyat was now completely at a loss how to proceed. He was satisfied that Mabel was in the vault; but in what way to guide himself to her retreat, he could not tell; and it was evident she herself would not assist him. Persuaded, however, if he could but make himself known, he should no longer be shunned, he entered one of the lateral passages, and ever and anon, as he proceeded, repeated Mabel's name in a low soft tone. The stratagem was successful. Presently, he heard a light footstep approaching him, and a gentle voice inquired—

"Who calls me?"

"A friend," replied Wyat.

"Your name?" she demanded.

"You will not know me if I declare myself, Mabel," he replied; "but I am called Sir Thomas Wyat."

"The name *is* well known to me," she

replied, in trembling tones; "and I have seen you once—at my grandfather's cottage. But why have you come here?—Do you know where you are?"

"I know that I am in the cave of Herne the Hunter," replied Wyat; "and one of my motives for seeking it was to set you free. But there is nothing to prevent your flight now."

"Alas! there is," she replied. "I am chained here by bonds I cannot break. Herne has declared that any attempt at escape on my part shall be followed by the death of my grandsire. And he does not threaten idly, as no doubt you know. Besides, the most terrible vengeance would fall on my own head. No,—I cannot—dare not fly. But let us not talk in the dark. Come with me to procure a light. Give me your hand, and I will lead you to my cell."

Taking the small, trembling hand offered him, Wyat followed his conductress down the passage. A few steps brought them to a door, which she pushed aside and disclosed a small chamber, hewn out of the rock, in a recess of which a lamp was burning. Lighting the other lamp which she had recently extinguished, she placed it on a rude table.

"Have you been long a prisoner here?" asked Wyat, fixing his regards upon her countenance, which, though it had lost somewhat of its bloom, had gained much in interest and beauty.

"For three months, I suppose," she replied; "but I am not able to calculate the lapse of time. It has seemed very,—very long. Oh that I could behold the sun again, and breathe the fresh, pure air!"

"Come with me, and you shall do so," rejoined Wyat.

"I have told you I cannot fly," she answered. "I cannot sacrifice my grandsire."

"But if he is leagued with this demon, he deserves the worst fate that can befall him," said Wyat. "You should think only of your own safety. What can be the motive of your detention?"

"I tremble to think of it," she replied; "but I fear that Herne has conceived a passion for me."

"Then indeed you must fly," cried Wyat; "such unhallowed love will lead to perdition of soul and body."

"Oh that there was any hope for me!" she ejaculated.

"There *is* hope," replied Wyat. "I will protect you—will care for you—will love you."

"Love me!" exclaimed Mabel, a deep

blush overspreading her pale features. "You love another."

"Absence has enabled me to overcome the vehemence of my passion," replied Wyat, "and I feel that my heart is susceptible of new emotions. But you, maiden," he added, coldly—"you were captivated by the admiration of the king."

"My love, like yours, is past," she answered, with a faint smile; "but if I were out of Herne's power I feel that I could love again, and far more deeply than I loved before—for that, in fact, was rather the result of vanity than of real regard."

"Mabel," said Wyat, taking her hand, and gazing into her eyes, "if I set you free, will you love me?"

"I love you already," she replied; "but if that could be, my whole life should be devoted to you.—Ha!" she exclaimed, with a sudden change of tone, "footsteps are ap-

proaching!—it is Fenwolf. Hide yourself within that recess."

Though doubting the prudence of the course, Wyat yielded to her terrified and imploring looks, and concealed himself in the manner she had indicated. He was scarcely ensconced in the recess, when the door opened, and Morgan Fenwolf stepped in, followed by her grandfather. Fenwolf gazed suspiciously round the little chamber, and then glanced significantly at old Tristram, but he made no remark.

"What brings you here?" demanded Mabel, tremblingly.

"You are wanted in the cave," said Fenwolf.

"I will follow you anon," she replied.

"You must come at once," rejoined Fenwolf, authoritatively. "Herne will become impatient."

Upon this, Mabel rose, and without daring to cast a look towards the spot where Wyat was concealed, quitted the cell with them. No sooner were they all out, than Fenwolf, hastily shutting the door, turned the key in the lock, and taking it out, exclaimed,—"So, we have secured you, Sir Thomas Wyat. No fear of your revealing the secret of the cave now, or flying with Mabel—ha! ha!"

III.

IN WHAT MANNER HERNE DECLARED HIS PASSION FOR MABEL.

UTTERLY disregarding her cries and entreaties, Fenwolf dragged Mabel into the great cavern, and forced her to take a seat on a bench near the spot where a heap of ashes shewed that the fire was ordinarily lighted. All this while, her grandfather had averted his face from her, as if fearing to meet her regards, and he now busied him-

self in striking a light, and setting fire to a pile of fagots and small logs of wood.

"I thought you told me Herne was here," said Mabel, in a tone of bitter reproach, to Fenwolf, who seated himself beside her on the bench.

"He will be here ere long," he replied, sullenly.

"Oh, do not detain Sir Thomas Wyat," cried Mabel, piteously; "do not deliver him to your dread master! Do what you will with me,—but let him go."

"I will tell you what I will do," replied Fenwolf, in a low tone; "I will set Sir Thomas at liberty, and run all risks of Herne's displeasure, if you will promise to be mine."

Mabel replied by a look of unutterable disgust.

"Then he will await Herne's coming where he is," rejoined Fenwolf.

Saying which, he arose, and pushing a table near the bench, took the remains of a huge venison pasty and a loaf, from a hutch standing on one side of the cavern.

By this time, old Tristram, having succeeded in lighting the fire, placed himself at the further end of the table, and fell to work upon the viands with Fenwolf. Mabel was pressed to partake of the repast, but she declined the offer. A large stone bottle was next produced from the hutch, and emptied of its contents by the pair, who seemed well contented with their regale.

Meanwhile, Mabel was revolving the possibility of flight, and more than once had determined to make an attempt, but fear restrained her. Her grandsire, as has been stated, sedulously avoided her gaze, and turned a deaf ear to her complaints and entreaties. But once, when Fenwolf's back was turned, she caught him gazing at her

with peculiar significance, and then comprehended the meaning of his strange conduct. He evidently only awaited an opportunity to assist her.

Satisfied of this, she became more tranquil, and about an hour having elapsed, during which nothing was said by the party, the low winding of a horn was heard, and Fenwolf started to his feet, exclaiming—"It is Herne!"

The next moment, the demon huntsman rode from one of the lateral passages into the cave. He was mounted on a wild-looking black horse, with flowing mane and tail, eyes glowing like carbuncles, and in all respects resembling the sable steed he had lost in the forest.

Springing to the ground, he beckoned Fenwolf to him, and exchanging a few words with him, in a low tone, delivered his steed

to him, with orders to take it to the stable in the rock. He then signed to Tristram to go with him, and approached Mabel.

"So you have seen Sir Thomas Wyat, I find," he said, in a stern tone.

Mabel made no answer, and did not even raise her eyes towards him.

"And he has told you he loves you, and has urged you to fly with him—ha?" pursued Herne.

Mabel still did not dare to look up, but a deep blush overspread her cheek.

"He was mad to venture hither," continued Herne; "but having done so, he must take the consequences."

"You will not destroy him?" cried Mabel, imploringly.

"He will perish by a hand as terrible as mine," laughed Herne—"by that of famine. He will never quit that dungeon alive, unless——"

"Unless what?" gasped Mabel.

"Unless he is leagued with me," replied Herne. "And now let him pass, for I would speak of myself. I have already told you that I love you, and am resolved to make you mine. You shudder, but wherefore? It is a glorious destiny to be the bride of the wild hunter—the fiend who rules the forest, and who in his broad domain is more powerful than the king. The old forester, Robin Hood, had his maid Marian; and what was he compared to me? He had neither my skill, nor my power. Be mine, and you shall accompany me on my midnight rides; shall watch the fleet stag dart over the moonlight glade, or down the lengthened vista. You shall feel all the unutterable excitement of the chase. You shall thread with me the tangled grove; swim the river and the lake; and enjoy a thousand plea-

sures hitherto unknown to you. Be mine, and I will make you mistress of all my secrets, and compel the band whom I will gather round me to pay you homage. Be mine, and you shall have power of life and death over them, as if you were absolute queen. And from me, whom all fear, and all obey, you shall have love and worship."

And he would have taken her hand, but she recoiled from him with horror.

"Though I now inspire you with terror and aversion," pursued Herne. "the time will come when you will love me as passionately as I was once beloved by one of whom you are the image."

"And she is dead?" asked Mabel, with curiosity.

"Dead!" exclaimed Herne. "Thrice fifty years have flown by since she dwelt upon earth. The acorn which was then shed

in the forest has grown into a lusty oak, while trees at that time in their pride have fallen and decayed away. Dead!—yes, she has passed from all memory save mine, where she will ever dwell. Generations of men have gone down to the grave since her time —a succession of kings have ruled in the castle—but I am still a denizen of the forest. For crimes I then committed I am doomed to wander within it; and shall haunt it, unless released, till the crack of doom."

"Liberate me!" cried Mabel; "liberate your other prisoner, and we will pray for your release."

"No more of this!" cried Herne, fiercely. "If you would not call down instant and terible punishment on your head—punishment that I cannot avert, and must inflict—you will mention nothing sacred in my hearing, and never allude to prayer. I am beyond the reach of salvation."

"Oh, say not so!" cried Mabel, in a tone of commiseration.

"I will tell you how my doom was accomplished," rejoined Herne, wildly. To gain her of whom I have just spoken, and who was already avowed to Heaven, I invoked the powers of darkness. I proffered my soul to the Evil One if he would secure her to me; and the condition demanded by him was that I should become what I am—the fiend of the forest, with power to terrify and to tempt, and with other more fearful and fatal powers besides."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel.

"I grasped at the offer," pursued Herne. "She I loved became mine. But she was speedily snatched from me by death,—and since then I have known no human passion except hatred and revenge. I have dwelt in this forest; sometimes alone—sometimes at the head of a numerous band—but

always exerting a baneful influence over mankind. At last, I saw the image of her I loved again appear before me, and the old passion was revived within my breast. Chance has thrown you in my way,—and mine you shall be, Mabel!"

"I will die rather," she replied, with a shudder.

"You cannot escape me," rejoined Herne, with a triumphant laugh; "you cannot avoid your fate. But I want not to deal harshly with you. I love you, and would win you rather by persuasion than by force. Consent to be mine then, and I give Wyat his life and liberty."

"I cannot—I cannot," she replied.

"Not only do I offer you Wyat's life as the price of your compliance," persevered Herne; "but you shall have whatever else you may seek—jewels, ornaments, costly attire, treasure,—for of such I possess a store."

"And of what use would they be to me here?" said Mabel.

"I will not always confine you to this cave," replied Herne. "You shall go where you please, and live as you please, but you must come to me whenever I summon you."

"And what of my grandsire?" she demanded.

"Heed him not," replied Herne. "He is no relative of yours. I will now clear up the mystery that hangs over your birth. You are the offspring of one who for years has exercised greater sway than the king within this realm, but who is now disgraced and ruined, and nigh his end. His priestly vows forbid him to own you, even if he desired to do so."

"Have I seen him?" demanded Mabel.

"You have," replied Herne—"and he has seen you; and little did he know when he sought you out, that he was essaying to

maintain his own power, and overturn that of another, by the dishonour of his daughter; though, if he had done so," he added, with a scoffing laugh, "it might not have restrained him."

"I know whom you mean," said Mabel. "And is it possible he can be my father?"

"It is as I have told you," replied Herne. "You now know my resolve. To-morrow, at midnight, our nuptials shall take place."

"Nuptials!" echoed Mabel.

"Ay, at that altar," he cried, pointing to the Druid pile of stones—"there you shall vow yourself to me, and I to you, before terrible witnesses. I shall have no fear that you will break your oath. Reflect upon what I have said."

With this, he placed the bugle to his lips, blew a low call upon it, and Fenwolf and Tristram immediately answering the

summons, he whispered some instructions to the former, and disappeared down one of the side passages.

Fenwolf's deportment was now more sullen than before. In vain did Mabel inquire from him what Herne was about to do with Sir Thomas Wyat. He returned no answer, and at last, wearied by her importunity, desired her to hold her peace. Just then, Tristram quitted the cavern for a moment, when he instantly changed his manner, and said to her quickly,—

"I overheard what passed between you and Herne. Consent to be mine, and I will deliver you from him."

"That were to exchange one evil for another," she replied. "If you would serve me, deliver Sir Thomas Wyat."

"I will only deliver him on the terms I have mentioned," replied Fenwolf.

At this moment, Tristram returned, and nothing more passed between them.

Fresh logs were then thrown on the fire by Fenwolf, and at his request Tristram proceeded to a hole in the rock, which served as a sort of larder, and brought from it some pieces of venison, which were broiled upon the embers.

At the close of the repast, of which Mabel sparingly partook, she was conducted by Morgan Fenwolf into a small chamber opening out of the great cavern, which was furnished, like the cell she had lately occupied, with a small straw pallet. Leaving her a lamp, Fenwolf locked the door, and placed the key in his girdle.

IV.

HOW SIR THOMAS WYAT WAS VISITED BY HERNE IN THE CELL.

MADE aware by the clangour of the lock, and Fenwolf's exulting laughter, of the snare in which he had been caught, Sir Thomas Wyat instantly sprang from his hiding-place, and rushed to the door; but being framed of the stoutest oak, and strengthened with plates of iron, it defied all his efforts, nerved as they were by rage and despair, to

burst it open. Mabel's shrieks, as she was dragged away, reached his ears, and increased his anguish; and he called out loudly to her companions to return, but his vociferations were only treated with derision.

Finding it useless to struggle further, Wyat threw himself upon the bench, and endeavoured to discover some means of deliverance from his present hazardous position. He glanced round the cell to see whether there was any other outlet than the doorway, but he could discern none, except a narrow grated loophole opening upon the passage, and contrived, doubtless, for the admission of air to the chamber. No dungeon could be more secure.

Raising the lamp, he examined every crevice, but all seemed solid stone. The recess in which he had taken shelter, proved to be a mere hollow in the wall. In one corner lay a small straw pallet, which, no

doubt, had formed the couch of Mabel; and this, together with the stone bench and rude table of the same material, constituted the sole furniture of the place.

Having taken this careful survey of the cell, Wyat again sat down upon the bench with the conviction that escape was out of the question; and he therefore endeavoured to prepare himself for the worst, for it was more than probable he would be allowed to perish of starvation. To a fiery nature like his, the dreadful uncertainty in which he was placed was more difficult of endurance than bodily torture. And he was destined to endure it long. Many hours flew by, during which nothing occurred to relieve the terrible monotony of his situation. At length, in spite of his anxiety, slumber stole upon him unawares. It was filled with frightful visions.

How long he slept he knew not, but when

he awoke he found that the cell must have been visited in the interval, for there was a manchet of bread, part of a cold neck of venison, and a flask of wine on the table. It was evident, therefore, that his captors did not mean to starve him, and yielding to the promptings of appetite, he attacked the provisions, determined to keep strict watch when his gaoler should next visit him.

The repast finished, he again examined the cell, but with no better success than before; and he felt almost certain, from the position in which the bench was placed, that the visitor had not found entrance through the door.

After another long and dreary interval, finding that sleep was stealing upon him fast, he placed the bench near the door, and leaned his back against the latter, certain that in this position he should be wakened

if any one attempted to gain admittance by that way. His slumber was again disturbed by fearful dreams; and he was at length aroused by a touch upon the shoulder, while a deep voice sounded his own name in his ears.

Starting to his feet, and scarcely able to separate the reality from the hideous phantasms that had troubled him, he found that the door was still fastened, and the bench unremoved, while before him stood Herne the Hunter.

"Welcome again to my cave, Sir Thomas Wyat," cried the demon, with a mocking laugh; "I told you, on the night of the attempt upon the king, that though you escaped *him* you would not escape *me*. And so it has come to pass. You are now wholly in my power, body and soul—ha! ha!"

"I defy you, false fiend," replied Wyat.

"I was mad enough to proffer you my soul on certain conditions. But they have never been fulfilled."

"They may yet be so," rejoined Herne.

"No," replied Wyat, "I have purged my heart from the fierce and unhallowed passion that swayed it. I desire no assistance from you."

"If you have changed your mind, that is nought to me," rejoined the demon, derisively—"I shall hold you to your compact."

"Again I say I renounce you, infernal spirit," cried Wyat—"you may destroy my body, but you can work no mischief to my soul."

"You alarm yourself without reason, good Sir Thomas," replied Herne, in a slightly sneering tone. "I am not the malignant being you suppose me; neither

am I bent upon fighting the battles of the enemy of mankind against Heaven. I may be leagued with the powers of darkness, but I have no wish to aid them; and I therefore leave you to take care of your soul in your own way. What I desire from you is your service while living. Now listen to the conditions I have to propose. You must bind yourself by a terrible oath, the slightest infraction of which shall involve the perdition of the soul you are so solicitous to preserve, not to disclose aught you may see, or that may be imparted to you here. You must also swear implicit obedience to me in all things—to execute any secret commissions, of whatever nature, I may give you—to bring associates to my band—and to join me in any enterprise I may propose. This oath taken, you are free. Refuse it, and I leave you to perish."

"I do refuse it," replied Wyat, boldly. "I would die a thousand deaths rather than so bind myself. Neither do I fear being left to perish here. You shall not quit this cell without me."

"You are a stout soldier, Sir Thomas Wyat," rejoined the demon, with a scornful laugh; "but you are scarcely a match for Herne the Hunter, as you will find, if you are rash enough to make the experiment. Beware!" he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, observing the knight lay his hand upon his sword, "I am invulnerable, and you will, therefore, vainly strike at me. Do not compel me to use the dread means, which I could instantly employ, to subject you to my will. I mean you well, and would rather serve than injure you. But I will not let you go, unless you league yourself with me. Swear, therefore, obedience to me, and

depart hence to your friends, Surrey and Richmond, and tell them you have failed to find me."

"Ha!" exclaimed Wyat, "you know, then, of our meeting."

"Your plans are known to me," laughed Herne. "It is now eventide, and at midnight the meeting will take place in the forester's hut. If *you* attend it not, *I* will. They will be my prisoners as well as you. To preserve yourself and save them, you must join me."

"Before I return an answer," said Wyat, "I must know what has become of Mabel Lyndwood."

"Mabel Lyndwood is nought to you, Sir Thomas," rejoined Herne, coldly.

"She is so much to me that I will run a risk for her which I would not run for myself," replied Wyat. "If I promise obedi-

ence to you, will you liberate her—will you let her depart with me?"

"No," replied Herne, peremptorily. "Banish all thoughts of her from your breast. You will never behold her again. I will give you time for reflection on my proposal. An hour before midnight I shall return, and if I find you in the same mind, I shall abandon you to your fate."

And with these words, he stepped back towards the lower end of the cell. Wyat instantly sprang after him, but before he could reach him a flash of fire caused him to recoil, and to his horror and amazement, he beheld the rock open, and yield a passage to the retreating figure.

When the sulphureous smoke with which the little cell was filled, had in some degree cleared off, Wyat examined the sides of

the rock, but could not find the slightest trace of a secret outlet, and therefore concluded that the disappearance of the demon had been effected by magic.

V.

HOW MABEL ESCAPED FROM THE CAVE WITH SIR THOMAS WYAT.

THE next day Mabel was set at liberty by her jailor, and the hours flew by without the opportunity of escape, for which she sighed, occurring to her. As night drew on, she became more anxious, and at last expressed a wish to retire to her cell. When about to fasten the door, Fenwolf found that the lock had got strained, and the bolts

would not move, and he was therefore obliged to content himself by placing a bench against it, on which he took a seat.

About an hour after Mabel's retirement, old Tristram offered to relieve guard with Fenwolf, but this the other positively declined, and leaning against the door, disposed himself to slumber. Tristram then threw himself on the floor, and in a short time all seemed buried in repose.

By and by, however, when Fenwolf's heavy breathing gave token of the soundness of his sleep, Tristram raised himself upon his elbow, and gazed round. The lamp placed upon the table imperfectly illumined the cavern, for the fire which had been lighted to cook the evening meal had gone out completely. Getting up cautiously, and drawing his hunting-knife, the old man crept towards Fenwolf, apparently with the

intent of stabbing him, but he suddenly changed his resolution, and dropped his arm.

At that moment, as if preternaturally warned, Fenwolf opened his eyes, and seeing the old forester standing by, sprang upon him, and seized him by the throat.

"Ah! traitor!" he exclaimed, "what are you about to do?"

"I am no traitor," replied the old man. "I heard a noise in the passage leading to Wyat's cell, and I was about to rouse you, when you awakened of your own accord, probably disturbed by the noise."

"It may be," replied Fenwolf, satisfied with the excuse, and relinquishing his grasp. "I fancied I heard something in my dreams. But come with me to Wyat's cell. I will not leave you here."

And snatching up the lamp, he hurried

with Tristram into the passage. Scarcely were they gone, than the door of the cell was opened by Mabel, who had overheard what had passed; and so hurriedly did she issue forth that she overturned the bench, which fell to the ground with a considerable clatter. She had only just time to replace it, and to conceal herself in an adjoining passage, when Fenwolf rushed back into the cavern.

"It was a false alarm," he cried. "I saw Sir Thomas Wyat in his cell through the loophole, and I have brought the key away with me. But I am sure I heard a noise here."

"It must have been mere fancy," said Tristram. "All is as we left it."

"It seems so, certes," replied Fenwolf, doubtfully. "But I will make sure."

While he placed his ear to the door,

Mabel gave a signal to Tristram that she was safe. Persuaded that he heard some sound in the chamber, Fenwolf nodded to Tristram that all was right, and resumed his seat.

In less than ten minutes, he was again asleep. Mabel then emerged from her concealment, and cautiously approached Tristram, who feigned also to slumber. As she approached him, he rose noiselessly to his feet.

"The plan has succeeded," he said, in a low tone. "It was I who spoiled the lock. But come with me; I will lead you out of the cavern."

"Not without Sir Thomas Wyat," she replied; "I will not leave him here."

"You will only expose yourself to risk, and fail to deliver him," rejoined Tristram. "Fenwolf has the key of his cell.—Nay, if you are determined upon it, I will not hin-

der you; but you must find your own way out, for I shall not assist Sir Thomas Wyat."

Motioning him to silence, Mabel crept slowly, and on the points of her feet, towards Fenwolf.

The key was in his girdle. Leaning over him, she suddenly and dexterously plucked it forth.

At the very moment she possessed herself of it, Fenwolf stirred, and she dived down, and concealed herself beneath the table. Fenwolf, who had been only slightly disturbed, looked up, and seeing Tristram in his former position, which he had resumed when Mabel commenced her task, again disposed himself to slumber.

Waiting till she was assured of the soundness of his repose, Mabel crept from under the table, signed to Tristram to remain where he was, and glided with swift and

noiseless footsteps down the passage leading to the cell. In a moment, she was at the door—the key was in the lock—and she stood before Sir Thomas Wyat.

A few words sufficed to explain to the astonished knight how she came there, and comprehending that not a moment was to be lost, he followed her forth.

In the passage, they held a brief consultation together, in a low tone, as to the best means of escape, for they deemed it useless to apply to Tristram. The outlet with which Sir Thomas Wyat was acquainted lay on the other side of the cavern; nor did he know how to discover the particular passage leading to it. As to Mabel, she could offer no information, but she knew that the stable lay in an adjoining passage.

Recollecting, from former experience, how well the steeds were trained, Sir Thomas

Wyat eagerly caught at the suggestion, and Mabel led him further down the passage, and striking off through an opening on the left, brought him, after one or two turns, to a large chamber, in which two or three black horses were kept.

Loosening one of them, Wyat placed a bridle on his neck, sprang upon his back, and took up Mabel beside him. He then struck his heels against the sides of the animal, who needed no further incitement to dash along the passage, and in a few seconds brought them into the cavern.

The trampling of the horse wakened Fenwolf, who started to his feet, and ran after them, shouting furiously; but he was too late. Goaded by Wyat's dagger, the steed dashed furiously on, and plunging with its double burthen into the pool at the bottom of the cavern, disappeared.

VI.

OF THE DESPERATE RESOLUTION FORMED BY TRISTRAM AND FENWOLF;—AND HOW THE TRAIN WAS LAID.

TRANSPORTED with rage at the escape of the fugitives, Fenwolf turned to old Tristram, and drawing his knife threatened to make an end of him. But the old man, who was armed with a short hunting-sword, stood upon his defence, and they remained brandishing their weapons at each other for some minutes, but without striking a blow.

"Well, I leave you to Herne's vengeance," said Fenwolf, returning his knife to his belt. "You will pay dearly for allowing them to escape."

"I will take my chance," replied Tristram, moodily—"my mind is made up to the worst. I will no longer serve this fiend."

"What! dare you break your oath?" cried Fenwolf. "Remember the terrible consequences."

"I care not for them," replied Tristram. "Harkee, Fenwolf, I know you will not betray me, for you hate him as much as I do, and have as great a desire for revenge. I will rid the forest of this fell being."

"Would you could make good your words, old man," replied Fenwolf; "I would give my life for vengeance upon him."

"I take the offer," said Tristram—"you *shall* have vengeance."

"But how?" cried the other. "I have proved that he is invulnerable—and the prints of his hands are written in black characters upon my throat. If we could capture him, and deliver him to the king, we might purchase our own pardon."

"No, that can never be," said Tristram. "My plan is to destroy him."

"Well, let me hear it," said Fenwolf.

"Come with me, then," rejoined Tristram.

And taking up the lamp, he led the way down a narrow lateral passage. When about half way down it, he stopped before a low door, cased with iron, which he opened, and shewed that the recess was filled with large canvas bags.

"Why, this is the powder-magazine," said Fenwolf. "I can now guess how you

mean to destroy Herne. I like the scheme well enough; but it cannot be executed without certain destruction to ourselves."

"I will take all risk upon myself," said Tristram. "I only require your aid in the preparations. What I propose to do is this. There is powder enough in the magazine, not only to blow up the cave, but to set fire to all the wood surrounding it. It must be scattered among the dry brushwood in a great circle round the cave, and connected by a train with this magazine. When Herne comes back, I will fire the train."

"There is much hazard in the scheme, and I fear it will fail," replied Fenwolf, after a pause—"nevertheless, I will assist you."

"Then, let us go to work at once," said Tristram, "for we have no time to lose. Herne will be here before midnight, and I should like to have all ready for him."

Accordingly, they each shouldered a couple of the bags, and returning to the cavern, threaded a narrow passage, and emerged from the secret entrance in the grove.

While Fenwolf descended for a fresh supply of powder, Tristram commenced operations. Though autumn was now far advanced, there had been remarkably fine weather of late; the ground was thickly strewn with yellow leaves; the fern was brown and dry; and the brushwood crackled and broke as a passage was forced through it. The very trees were parched by the long-continued drought. Thus favoured in his design, Tristram scattered the contents of one of the bags in a thick line among the fern and brushwood, depositing here and there, among the roots of a tree, several pounds of powder, and covering the heaps over with dried sticks and leaves.

While he was thus employed, Fenwolf appeared with two more bags of powder, and descended again for a fresh supply. When he returned, laden as before, the old forester had already described a large portion of the circle he intended to take.

Judging that there was now powder sufficient, Tristram explained to his companion how to proceed; and the other commenced laying a train on the left of the secret entrance, carefully observing the instructions given him.

In less than an hour, they met together at a particular tree, and the formidable circle was complete.

"So far, well!" said Tristram, emptying the contents of his bag beneath the tree, and covering it with leaves and sticks, as before; "and now to connect this with the cavern."

With this, he opened another bag, and

drew a wide train towards the centre of the space. At length, he paused at the foot of a large hollow tree.

"I have ascertained," he said, "that this tree stands immediately over the magazine; and by following this rabbit's burrow, I have contrived to make a small entrance into it. A hollow reed introduced through the hole, and filled with powder, will be sure to reach the store below."

"An excellent idea!" replied Fenwolf. "I will fetch one instantly."

And starting off to the side of the lake, he presently returned with several long reeds, one of which was selected by Tristram, and thrust into the burrow. It proved of the precise length required; and as soon as it touched the bottom, it was carefully filled with powder from a horn. Having connected this tube with the side train, and

scattered powder for several yards around, so as to secure its instantaneous ignition, Tristram pronounced that the train was complete.

"We have now laid a trap from which Herne will scarcely escape," he observed, with a moody laugh, to Fenwolf.

They then prepared to return to the cave; but had not proceeded many yards, when Herne, mounted on his sable steed, burst through the trees.

"Ah! what do you here?" he cried, instantly checking his career. "I bade you keep strict watch over Mabel. Where is she?"

"She has escaped with Sir Thomas Wyat," replied Fenwolf; "and we have been in search of them."

"Escaped!" exclaimed Herne, springing from his steed, and rushing up to him;

"dogs! you have played me false. But your lives shall pay the penalty of your perfidy."

"We had no hand in it whatever," replied Fenwolf, doggedly. "She contrived to get out of a chamber in which I placed her, and to liberate Sir Thomas Wyat. They then procured a steed from the stable, and plunged through the pool into the lake."

"Hell's malison upon them, and upon you both!" cried Herne. "But you shall pay dearly for your heedlessness, if, indeed, it has not been something worse. How long have they been gone?"

"It may be two hours," replied Fenwolf.

"Go to the cave," cried Herne, "and await my return there, and if I recover not the prize, woe betide you both."

And with these words, he vaulted upon his steed and disappeared.

"And woe betide you too, false fiend," cried Fenwolf. "When you come back, you shall meet with a welcome you little expect. Would we had fired the train, Tristram, even though we had perished with him!"

"It will be time enough to fire it on his return," replied the old forester; "it is but postponing our vengeance for a short time. And now to fix our positions. I will take my station in yon brake."

"And I in that hollow tree," said Fenwolf. "Whoever first beholds him shall fire the train."

"Agreed!" replied Tristram. "Let us now descend to the cave, and see that all is right in the magazine, and then we will return and hold ourselves in readiness for action."

VII.

HOW THE TRAIN WAS FIRED;—AND WHAT FOLLOWED THE EXPLOSION.

About ten o'clock in the night under consideration, Surrey and Richmond, accompanied by the Duke of Shoreditch, and half a dozen other archers, set out from the castle, and took their way along the Great Park, in the direction of the lake.

They had not ridden far, when they were overtaken by two horsemen who, as far as

they could be discerned in that doubtful light, appeared stalwart personages, and well mounted, though plainly attired. The new comers very unceremoniously joined them.

"There are ill reports of the park, my masters," said the foremost of these persons to Surrey, "and we would willingly ride with you across it."

"But our way may not be yours, friend," replied Surrey, who did not altogether relish this intrusion. "We are not going farther than the lake."

"Our road lies in that direction," replied the other, "and, if you please, we will bear you company so far as we go. Come, tell me frankly," he added, after a pause, "are you not come forth to seek Herne the Hunter?"

"Why do you ask, friend?" rejoined the earl, somewhat angrily.

"Because if so," replied the other, "I shall be right glad to join you, and so will my friend, Tony Cryspyn, who is close behind me. I have an old grudge to settle with this Herne, who has more than once attacked me, and I shall be glad to pay it."

"If you will take my advice, Hugh Dacre, you will ride on, and leave the achievement of the adventure to these young galliards," interposed Cryspyn.

"Nay, by the mass! that shall never be," rejoined Dacre, "if they have no objection to our joining them. If they have, they have only to say so, and we will go on."

"I will be plain with you, my masters," said Surrey: "we are determined this night, as you have rightly conjectured, to seek out Herne the Hunter; and we hope to obtain such clue to him as will ensure his capture. If, therefore, you are anxious to join us, we

shall be glad of your aid. But you must be content to follow, and not lead, and to act as you may be directed, or you will only be in the way, and we would rather dispense with your company."

"We are content with the terms,—are we not, Tony?" said Dacre.

His companion answered somewhat sullenly in the affirmative.

"And now that the matter is arranged, may I ask where you propose to go?" he continued.

"We are on our way to a hut on the lake, where we expect a companion to join us," replied Surrey.

"What! Tristram Lyndwood's cottage?" demanded Dacre.

"Ay," replied the Earl, "and we hope to recover his fair grand-daughter from the power of the demon."

"Ha! say you so?" cried Dacre; "that were a feat indeed!"

The two strangers then rode apart for a few moments, and conversed together in a low tone, during which Richmond expressed his doubts of them to Surrey, adding that he was determined to get rid of them.

The new comers, however, were not easily shaken off. As soon as they perceived the duke's design, they stuck more pertinaciously to him and the earl than before, and made it evident they would not be dismissed.

By this time, they had passed Spring Hill, and were within a mile of the valley in which lay the marsh, when a cry for help was heard in the thicket on the left, and the troop immediately halted. The cry was repeated, and Surrey, bidding the others

follow him, dashed off in the direction of the sound.

Presently, they perceived two figures beneath the trees, whom they found, on a nearer approach, were Sir Thomas Wyat, with Mabel in a state of insensibility in his arms.

Dismounting by the side of his friend, Surrey hastily demanded how he came there, and what had happened ?

" It is too long a story to relate now," said Wyat; "but the sum of it is, that I have escaped, as you see, by the aid of this damsel, from the clutches of the demon. Our flight was effected on horseback, and we had to plunge into the lake. The immersion deprived my fair preserver of sensibility, so that as soon as I landed, and gained a covert where I fancied myself

secure, I dismounted, and tried to restore her. While I was thus occupied, the steed I had brought with me broke his bridle, and darted off into the woods. After awhile Mabel opened her eyes, but she was so weak that she could not move, and I was fain to make her a couch in the fern, in the hope that she would speedily revive. But the fright and suffering had been too much for her, and a succession of fainting fits followed, during which I thought she would expire. This is all. Now, let us prepare a litter for her, and convey her where proper assistance can be rendered."

Meanwhile the others had come up, and Hugh Dacre flinging himself from his horse, and pushing Surrey somewhat rudely aside, advanced towards Mabel, and taking her hand, said, in a voice of some emotion,

"Alas! poor girl! I did not expect to meet thee again in this state."

"You knew her, then?" said Surrey.

Dacre muttered an affirmative.

"Who is this man?" asked Wyat of the earl.

"I know him not," answered Surrey. "He joined us on the road hither."

"I am well known to Sir Thomas Wyat," replied Dacre, in a significant tone, "as he will avouch when I recall certain matters to his mind. But do not let us lose time here. This damsel claims our first attention. She must be conveyed to a place of safety, and where she can be well tended. We can then return to search for Herne."

Upon this, a litter of branches was speedily made, and Mabel laid upon it. The simple conveyance was carried by four of the

archers. The little cavalcade then quitted the thicket, and began to retrace its course towards the castle. Wyat had been accommodated with a horse by one of the archers, and he rode in a melancholy manner by the side of the litter.

They had got back nearly as far as the brow of Spring Hill, when a horseman, in a wild garb, and mounted on a coal-black steed, dashed suddenly, and at a furious pace out of the trees on the right. He made towards the litter, overturning Sir Thomas Wyat, and, before any opposition could be offered him, seized the inanimate form of Mabel, and placing her before him on his steed, dashed off as swiftly as he came, and with a burst of loud, exulting laughter.

"It is Herne! it is Herne!" burst from every lip; and they all started in pursuit,

urging their horses to the utmost speed. Sir Thomas Wyatt had instantly remounted his steed, and he soon came up with the others.

Herne's triumphant and demoniacal laugh was heard as he scoured with the swiftness of the wind down the long glade. But the fiercest determination animated his pursuers, who being all admirably mounted, managed to keep him fully in view.

Away! away! he speeded in the direction of the lake; and after him they thundered, straining every sinew in the desperate chase. It was a wild and extraordinary sight, and partook of the fantastical character of a dream.

At length, Herne reached the acclivity, at the foot of which lay the waters of the lake glimmering in the starlight, and by the time he had descended to its foot, his pursuers had gained its brow.

The exertions made by Sir Thomas Wyat had brought him a little in advance of the others. Furiously goading his horse, he dashed down the hill side at a terrific pace.

All at once, as he kept his eye on the flying figure of the demon, he was startled by a sudden burst of flame in the valley. A wide circle of light was rapidly described, a rumbling sound was heard like that preceding an earthquake, and a tremendous explosion followed, hurling trees and fragments of rock into the air.

Astounded at the extraordinary occurrence, and not knowing what might ensue, the pursuers reined in their steeds. But the terror of the scene was not yet over. The whole of the brushwood had caught fire, and blazed up with the fury and swiftness of lighted flax. The flames seized the

parched branches of the trees, and in a few seconds the whole grove was on fire.

The sight was awfully grand, for the wind, which was blowing strongly, swept the flames forward, so that they devoured all before them.

When the first flash was seen, the demon had checked his steed, and backed him, so that he had escaped without injury, and he stood at the edge of the flaming circle watching the progress of the devastating element; but at last, finding that his pursuers had taken heart, and were approaching him, he bestirred himself, and rode round the blazing zone.

Having by this time recovered from their surprise, Wyat and Surrey dashed after him, and got so near him that they made sure of his capture. But at the very mo-

ment, they expected to reach him, he turned his horse's head, and forced him to leap over the blazing boundary.

In vain the pursuers attempted to follow. Their horses refused to encounter the flames; while Wyat's steed, urged on by its frantic master, reared bolt upright, and dislodged him.

But the demon held on his way, apparently unscathed, in the midst of the flames, casting a look of grim defiance at his pursuers. As he passed a tree, from which volumes of fire were bursting, the most appalling shrieks reached his ear, and he beheld Morgan Fenwolf emerging from a hole in the trunk. But without bestowing more than a glance upon his unfortunate follower, he dashed forward, and becoming involved in the wreaths of flame and smoke was lost to sight.

Attracted by Fenwolf's cries, the beholders perceived him crawl out of the hole and clamber into the upper part of the tree, where he roared to them most piteously for aid. But even if they had been disposed to render it, it was impossible to do so now; and after terrible and protracted suffering, the poor wretch, half stifled with smoke, and unable longer to maintain his hold of the branch to which he had crept, fell into the flames beneath, and perished.

Attributing its outbreak to supernatural agency, the party gazed on in wonder at the fire, and rode round it as closely as their steeds would allow them. But though they tarried till the flames had abated, and little was left of the noble grove but a collection of charred and smoking stumps, nothing was seen of the fiend or of the hapless girl he had carried off. It served to

confirm the notion of the supernatural origin of the fire, in that it was confined within the mystic circle, and did not extend further into the woods.

At the time that the flames first burst forth, and revealed the countenances of the lookers on, it was discovered that the self-styled Dacre and Cryspyn were no other than the king and the Duke of Suffolk.

"If this mysterious being is mortal, he must have perished now," observed Henry; "and if he is not, it is useless to seek for him further."

Day had begun to break as the party quitted the scene of devastation. The king and Suffolk, with the archers, returned to the castle; but Wyat, Surrey, and Richmond, rode towards the lake, and proceeded along its banks in the direction of the forester's hut.

Their progress was suddenly arrested by the sound of lamentation, and they perceived in a little bay, overhung by trees, which screened it from the path, an old man kneeling beside the body of a female which he had partly dragged out of the lake. It was Tristram Lyndwood, and the body was that of Mabel. Her tresses were dishevelled, and dripping with moisture, as were her garments; and her features white as marble. The old man was weeping bitterly.

With Wyat to dismount, and grasp the cold hand of the hapless maiden, was the work of a moment.

"She is dead!" he cried, in a despairing voice, removing the dank tresses from her brow, and imprinting a reverent kiss upon it. "Dead!—lost to me for ever!"

"I found her entangled among those

water-weeds," said Tristram, in tones broken by emotion, "and had just dragged her to shore when you came up. As you hope to prosper, now and hereafter, give her a decent burial. For me all is over."

And, with a lamentable cry, he plunged into the lake, struck out to a short distance, and then sank to rise no more.

Thus ends the Fifth Book of the Chronicle of Windsor Castle.

WINDSOR CASTLE.

Book the Sixth.

JANE SEYMOUR.

I.

OF HENRY'S ATTACHMENT TO JANE SEYMOUR.

On the anniversary of Saint George, 1536, and exactly seven years from the opening of this chronicle, Henry assembled the knights-companions within Windsor Castle, to hold the grand feast of the most noble Order of the Garter.

Many important events had occurred in the wide interval thus suffered to elapse. Wolsey had long since sunk under his re-

verses—for he never regained the royal favour after his dismissal—and had expired at Leicester Abbey, on 26th November, 1530.

But the sufferings of Catherine of Arragon were prolonged up to the commencement of the year under consideration. After the divorce, and the elevation of Anne Boleyn to the throne in her stead, she withdrew to Kimbolton Castle, where she dwelt in the greatest retirement under the style of the princess dowager. Finding her end approaching, she sent a humble message to the king, imploring him to allow her one last interview with her daughter, that she might bestow her blessing upon her; but the request was refused her.

A touching letter, however, which she wrote to the king on her death-bed moved him to tears; and having ejaculated a few expressions of his sense of her many noble

noble qualities, he retired to his closet to indulge his grief in secret. Solemn obsequies were ordered to be performed at Windsor and Greenwich on the day of her interment, and the king and the whole of his retinue put on mourning for her.

With this arrangement Anne Boleyn cared not to comply. Though she had attained the summit of her ambition; though the divorce had been pronounced, and she was crowned queen; though she had given birth to a daughter,—the Princess Elizabeth, afterwards the illustrious queen of that name,—two years before; and, though she could have no reasonable apprehensions from her, the injured Catherine, during her lifetime, had always been an object of dread to her. She heard of her death with undisguised satisfaction, clapped her hands, exclaiming to her attendants, "Now I am

indeed queen!" and put the crowning point to her unfeeling conduct by decorating herself and her dames in the gayest apparel on the day of the funeral.

Alas! she little knew that at that very moment the work of retribution commenced, and that the wrongs of the injured queen, whose memory she thus outraged, were soon to be terribly and bloodily avenged.

Other changes had likewise taken place, which may be here recorded. The Earl of Surrey had made the tour of France, Italy, and the Empire, and had fully kept his word by proclaiming the supremacy of the fair Geraldine's beauty at all tilts and tournaments, at which he constantly bore away the prize. But the greatest reward, and that which he hoped would crown his fidelity—the hand of his mistress,—was never accorded him.

At the expiration of three years he returned home, polished by travel, and accounted one of the bravest and most accomplished cavaliers of the day. His reputation had preceded him, and he was received with marks of the highest distinction and favour by Henry, as well as by Anne Boleyn. But the king was still averse to the match, and forbade the fair Geraldine to return to court.

Finding so much opposition on all sides, the earl was at last brought to assent to the wish of the fair Geraldine, that their engagement should be broken off. In her letters she assured him that her love had undergone no abatement, and never would do so, but that she felt they must give up all idea of an union.

These letters, probably the result of some manœuvring on his own part, set on foot

by the royal mandate, were warmly seconded by the Duke of Norfolk; and, after many and long solicitations, he succeeded in wringing from his son a reluctant acquiescence to the arrangement.

The disappointment produced its natural consequences on the ardent temperament of the young earl, and completely chilled and blighted his feelings. He became moody and discontented; took little share in the amusements and pastimes going forward; and from being the blithest cavalier at court became the saddest. The change in his demeanour did not escape the notice of Anne Boleyn, who easily divined the cause, and she essayed by raillery and other arts to wean him from his grief. But all was for some time of no avail. The earl continued inconsolable. At last, however, by the instrumentality of the queen and his

father, he was contracted to the Lady Frances Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, and was married to her in 1535.

Long before this, the Duke of Richmond had been wedded to the Lady Mary Howard.

For some time previous to the present era of this chronicle, Anne Boleyn had observed a growing coolness towards her on the part of the king, and latterly it had become evident that his passion for her was fast subsiding, if, indeed, it had not altogether expired.

Though Anne had never truly loved her royal consort, and though at that very time she was secretly encouraging the regards of another, she felt troubled by this change, and watched all the king's movements with jealous anxiety to ascertain if any one had supplanted her in his affections.

At length, her vigilance was rewarded by

discovering a rival in one of the loveliest of her dames, Jane Seymour. This fair creature, the daughter of Sir John Seymour, of Wolff Hall, in Wiltshire, and who was afterwards, it is almost needless to say, raised to as high a dignity as Anne Boleyn herself, was now in the very pride of her beauty. Tall, exquisitely proportioned, with a complexion of the utmost brilliancy and delicacy, large liquid blue eyes, bright chesnut tresses, and lovely features, she possessed charms that could not fail to captivate the amorous monarch. It seems marvellous that Anne Boleyn should have such an attendant; but perhaps she felt confident in her own attractions.

Skilled in intrigue herself, Anne, now that her eyes were opened, perceived all the allurements thrown out by Jane to ensnare the king, and she intercepted many a fur-

tive glance between them. Still she did not dare to interfere. The fierceness of Henry's temper kept her in awe, and she well knew that the slightest opposition would only make him the more determined to run counter to her will. Trusting, therefore, to get rid of Jane Seymour by some stratagem, she resolved not to dismiss her except as a last resource.

A slight incident, however, occurred, which occasioned a departure from the prudent course she had laid down to herself.

Accompanied by her dames, she was traversing the great gallery of the palace at Greenwich, when she caught the reflection of Jane Seymour, who was following her, in a mirror, regarding a jewelled miniature. She instantly turned round at the sight, and Jane, in great confusion, thrust the picture into her bosom.

"Ah! what have you there?" cried Anne.

"A picture of my father, Sir John Seymour," replied Jane, blushing deeply.

"Let me look at it!" cried Anne, snatching the picture from her. "Ah! call you this your father? To my thinking, it is much more like my royal husband. Answer me frankly, minion—answer me, as you value your life! Did the king give you this?"

"I must decline answering the question," replied Jane, who by this time had recovered her composure.

"Ah! am I to be thus insolently treated by one of my own dames!" cried Anne.

"I intend no disrespect to your majesty," replied Jane; "and I will, since you insist upon it, freely confess that I received the

portrait from the king. I did not conceive there could be any harm in doing so, because I saw your majesty present your own portrait, the other day, to Sir Henry Norris."

Anne Boleyn turned as pale as death, and Jane Seymour perceived that she had her in her power.

"I gave the portrait to Sir Henry as a recompence for an important service he rendered me," said Anne, after a slight pause.

"No doubt," replied Jane; "and I marvel not that he should press it so fervently to his lips, seeing he must value the gift highly. The king likewise bestowed his portrait upon me for rendering him a service."

"And what was that?" asked Anne.

"Nay, there your majesty must hold me excused," said the other. "It were to betray his highnes's confidence to declare it. I must refer you to him for an explanation."

"Well, you are in the right to keep the secret," said Anne, forcing a laugh; "I dare say there is no harm in the portrait—indeed, I am sure there is not, if it was given with the same intent that mine was bestowed upon Norris. And so we will say no more upon the matter—except that I must beg of you to be discreet with the king. If others should comment upon your conduct I may be compelled to dismiss you."

"Your majesty shall be obeyed," said Jane, with a look that intimated that the request had little weight with her.

"Catherine will be avenged by means of this woman," muttered Anne as she turned away. "I already feel some of the torments with which she threatened me. And she susspects Norris. I must impress more caution on him. Ah! when a man loves deeply, as he oves me, due restraint is seldom maintained."

But though alarmed, Anne was by no means aware of the critical position in which she stood. She could not persuade herself that she had entirely lost her influence with the king; and she thought that when his momentary passion had subsided, it would return to its old channels.

She was, however, mistaken. Jane Seymour was absolute mistress of his heart; and Anne was now as great a bar to him, as she had before been an attraction. Had her conduct been irreproachable, it might have been difficult to remove her; but, unfortunately, she had placed herself at his mercy, by yielding to the impulses of vanity, and secretly encouraging the passion of Sir Henry Norris, groom of the stole.

This favoured personage was somewhat above the middle size, squarely and strongly built. His features were regularly and finely formed, and he had a ruddy com-

plexion brown, curling hair, good teeth, and fine eyes of a clear blue. He possessed great personal strength; was expert in all manly exercises; and shone especially at the jousts and the manège. He was of an ardent temperament, and Anne Boleyn had inspired him with so desperate a passion, that he set at nought the fearful risk he ran to obtain her favour.

In all this seemed traceable the hand of fate,—in Henry's passion for Jane Seymour, and Anne's insane regard for Norris,—as if in this way, and by the same means in which she herself had been wronged, the injured Catherine of Arragon was to be avenged.

How far Henry's suspicions of his consort's regard for Norris had been roused, did not at the time appear. Whatever he felt in secret, he took care that no outward manifestation should betray him. On the con-

trary, he loaded Norris, who had always been a favourite with him, with new marks of regard, and encouraged rather than interdicted his approach to the queen.

Things were in this state when the court proceeded to Windsor, as before related, on Saint George's day.

II.

HOW ANNE BOLEYN RECEIVED PROOF OF HENRY'S PASSION FOR JANE SEYMOUR.

On the day after the solemnization of the Grand Feast of the Order of the Garter, a masqued fête of great splendour and magnificence was held within the castle. The whole of the state apartments were thrown open to the distinguished guests, and universal gaiety prevailed. No restraint was offered to the festivity by the king—for

though he was known to be present, he chose to remain in disguise.

The queen sat apart on a fauteuil in the deep embrasure of a window; and as various companies of fantastic characters advanced towards her, she more than once fancied that she detected amongst them the king, when the voices convinced her of her mistake. As the evening was wearing, a mask in a blue domino drew near her, and whispered, in a devoted and familiar tone,—"My queen."

"Is it you, Norris?" demanded Anne, under her breath.

"It is," he replied. "Oh, madam! I have been gazing at you the whole evening, but have not dared to approach you till now."

"I am sorry you have addressed me at all, Norris," she rejoined. "Your regard for

me has been noticed by others, and may reach the king's ears. You must promise never to address me in the language of passion again."

"If I may not utter my love, I shall go mad," replied Norris. "After raising me to the verge of Paradise, do not thrust me to the depths of Tartarus."

"I have neither raised you, nor do I cast you down," rejoined Anne. "That I am sensible of your devotion, and grateful for it, I admit, but nothing more. My love and allegiance are due to the king."

"True," replied Norris, bitterly; "they are so, but he is wholly insensible to your merits. At this very moment he is pouring his love-vows in the ear of Jane Seymour."

"Ah! is he so?" cried Anne; "shew me that it is so—let me have proof of his per-

fidy, and I may incline a more favourable ear to you."

"I will instantly obtain you the proof, madam," replied Norris, bowing and departing.

Scarcely had he quitted the queen, and mixed with the throng of dancers, than he felt a pressure upon his arm, and turning at the touch, beheld a tall monk, the lower part of whose face was muffled up, leaving only a pair of fierce black eyes, and a large aquiline nose visible.

"I know what you want, Sir Henry Norris," said the tall monk, in a low deep voice; "you wish to give the queen proof of her royal lord's inconstancy. Well, that is easily done. Come with me."

"Who are you?" demanded Norris, doubtfully.

"What matters it who I am?" rejoined

the other; "I am one of the masquers, and chance to know what is passing around me. I do not inquire into your motives, and therefore you have no right to inquire into mine."

"It is not for my own satisfaction that I desire this proof," said Norris, "because I would rather shield the king's indiscretions than betray them. But the queen has conceived suspicions which she is determined to verify."

"Think not to impose upon me," replied the monk, with a sneer. "Bring the queen this way, and she shall be satisfied to her heart's content."

"I can run no risk in trusting you," said Norris, "and therefore I accept your offer."

"Say no more," cried the monk, disdainfully, "I will await you here."

And Norris returned to the queen.

"Have you discovered anything?" she cried.

"Come with me, madam," said Norris, bowing, and taking her hand.

Proceeding thus, they glided through the throng of dancers, who respectfully cleared a passage for them as they walked along, until they approached the spot where the tall monk was standing. As they drew near him, he moved on, and Norris and the queen followed in silence. Passing from the great hall in which the crowd of dancers was assembled, they descended a short flight of steps, at the foot of which the monk paused, and pointed with his right hand to a chamber, partly screened by the folds of a curtain.

At this intimation, the queen and her companion stepped quickly on, and as she advanced, Anne Boleyn perceived Jane Sey-

mour and the king seated on a couch within the apartment. Henry was habited like a pilgrim, but he had thrown down his hat, ornamented with the scallop-shell, his vizard and his staff, and had just forced his fair companion to unmask.

At the sight, Anne was transfixed with jealous rage, and was for the moment almost unconscious of the presence of Norris, or of the monk, who remained behind the curtain, pointing to what was taking place.

"Your majesty is determined to expose my blushes," said Jane Seymour, slightly struggling with her royal lover.

"Nay, I only want to be satisfied that it is really yourself, sweetheart," cried Henry, passionately. "It was in mercy to me, I suppose, that you insisted upon shrouding those beauteous features from my view."

"Hear you that, madam!" whispered Norris to Anne.

The queen answered by a convulsive clasp of the hand.

"Your majesty but jests with me," said Jane Seymour.

"Jests!" cried Henry, passionately. "By my faith, I never understood the power of beauty till now. No charms ever moved my heart like yours; nor shall I know a moment's peace till you become mine."

"I am grieved to hear it, my liege," replied Jane Seymour, "for I never can be yours unless as your queen."

Again Norris hazarded a whisper to Anne Boleyn, which was answered by another nervous grasp of the hand.

"That is as much as to say," pursued Jane, seeing the gloomy reverie into which her royal lover was thrown, "I can give your majesty no hopes at all."

"You have been schooled by Anne Boleyn, sweetheart," said Henry.

"How so, my liege?" demanded Jane Seymour.

"Those are the very words she used to me when I wooed her, and which induced me to divorce Catherine of Arragon," replied Henry. "Now they may bring about her own removal."

"Just Heaven!" murmured Anne.

"I dare not listen to your majesty," said Jane Seymour, in a tremulous tone; "and yet, if I dared speak——"

"Speak on fearlessly, sweetheart," said Henry.

"Then I am well assured," said Jane, "that the queen no longer loves you—nay, that she loves another."

"It is false, minion!" cried Anne Boleyn, rushing forward, while Norris hastily retreated—"it is false! It is you who would deceive the king for your own purposes.

But I have fortunately been brought hither to prevent the injury you would do me. Oh! Henry, have I deserved this of you?"

"You have chanced to overhear part of a scene in a masquerade, madam, that is all," said the king.

"I have chanced to arrive most opportunely for myself," said Anne. "As for this slanderous and deceitful minion, I shall dismiss her from my service. If your majesty is determined to prove faithless to me, it shall not be with one of my own dames."

"Catherine of Arragon should have made that speech," retorted Jane Seymour, bitterly; "she had reason to complain that she was supplanted by one much beneath her. And she never played the king falsely."

"Nor have I," cried Anne, fiercely; "if I had my will, I should strike thee dead for

the insinuation. Henry,—my lord—my love—if you have any regard for me, instantly dismiss Jane Seymour."

"It may not be, madam," replied Henry, in a freezing tone. "She has done nothing to deserve dismissal. If any one is to blame in the matter, it is myself."

"And will you allow her to make these accusations against me without punishment?" cried Anne.

"Peace, madam!" cried the king, sternly; "and thank my good nature that I go no further into the matter. If you are weary of the masque, I pray you retire to your own apartments. For myself, I shall lead Jane Seymour to the bransle."

"And if your majesty should need a partner," said Jane Seymour, walking up to Anne, and speaking in a low tone, "you will doubtless find Sir Henry Norris disengaged."

The queen looked as if stricken by a thunderbolt. She heard the triumphant laugh of Jane Seymour, and she saw her led forth by the king, all smiles and beauty and triumph to the dance, and she covered her face in agony. While she was in this state, a deep voice breathed in her ears, "The vengeance of Catherine of Arragon begins to work."

Looking up, she beheld the tall figure of the monk retreating from the chamber.

III.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN NORRIS AND THE TALL MONK.

TOTTERING to the seat which Henry and Jane had just quitted, Anne sank into it. After a little time, having in some degree recovered her composure, she was about to return to the great hall, when Norris appeared.

"I did not deceive you, madam," he said, "when I told you the king was insensible to your charms. He only lives for Jane Seymour."

"Would I could dismiss her!" cried Anne, furiously.

"If you were to do so, she would soon be replaced by another," rejoined Norris. "The king delights only in change. With him the last face is ever the most beautiful."

"You speak fearful treason, sir!" replied Anne; "but I believe it to be the truth."

"Oh, then, madam!" pursued Norris, "since the king is so regardless of you, why trouble yourself about him? There are those who would sacrifice a thousand lives, if they possessed them, for your love."

"I fear it is the same with all men," rejoined Anne. "A woman's heart is a bauble, which, when obtained, is speedily tossed aside."

"Your majesty judges our sex too harshly," said Norris. "If I had the same

fortune as the king, I should never change."

"The king himself once thought so—once swore so," replied Anne, petulantly. "It is the common parlance of lovers. But I may not listen to such discourse longer."

"Oh, madam!" cried Norris, "you misjudge me greatly. My heart is not made of the same stuff as that of the royal Henry. I can love deeply, devotedly, lastingly!"

"Know you not that by these rash speeches you place your head in jeopardy?" said Anne.

"I would rather lose it than not be permitted to love you," he replied.

"But your rashness may endanger me," said the queen. "Your passion has already been noticed by Jane Seymour, and the slightest further indiscretion will be fatal."

"Nay, if that be so," cried Norris, "and

your majesty should be placed in the slightest peril on my account, I will banish myself from the court, and from your presence, whatever the effort may cost me!"

"No," replied Anne, "I will not tax you so hardly. I do not think," she added, tenderly, "deserted as I am by the king, that I could spare you."

"You confess, then, that I have inspired you with some regard?" he cried, rapturously.

"Do not indulge in these transports, Norris," said Anne, mournfully; "for your passion will only lead to your destruction —perchance, to mine! Let the certainty that I *do* love content you, and seek not to tempt your fate further."

"Oh! madam, you make me the happiest of men by the avowal," he cried. "I envy

not now the king, for I feel raised above him by your love."

"You must join the revel, Norris," said Anne—"your absence from it will be observed."

And extending her hand to him, he knelt down, and pressed it passionately to his lips.

"Ah! we are observed," she cried, suddenly, and almost with a shriek. "Rise, sir!"

Norris instantly sprang to his feet, and to his inexpressible dismay saw the figure of the tall monk gliding away. Throwing a meaning look at the almost sinking queen, he followed the mysterious observer into the great hall, determined to rid himself of him in some way, before he should have time to make any revelations.

Avoiding the brilliant throng, the monk entered the adjoining corridor, and descending the great staircase, passed into the upper quadrangle. As he moved slowly across it, Norris, who had followed him closely, came up with him.

"What would you with me, Sir Henry Norris?" said the monk, halting.

"You may guess," said Norris, sternly, and drawing his sword. "There are secrets which are dangerous to the possessor. Unless you swear never to betray what you have seen and heard, you die."

The tall monk laughed derisively.

"You know that your life is in my power," he said, "and therefore you threaten mine. Well, e'en take it if you can."

As he spoke, he drew a sword from beneath his robe, and stood upon his defence. After

a few passes, Norris's weapon was beaten from his grasp.

"You are now completely at my mercy," said the monk—"and I have nothing to do but to call the guard, and declare all I have heard to the king."

"I would rather you plunged your sword into my heart," said Norris.

"There is one way—and only one, by which my secrecy may be purchased," said the monk.

"Name it!" replied Norris. "Were it to be purchased by my soul's perdition, I would embrace it."

"You have hit the point exactly," rejoined the monk, drily. "Can you not guess with whom you have to deal?"

"Partly," replied Norris; "I never found such force in mortal arm as you have displayed."

"Probably not," laughed the other—"most of those who have ventured against me have found their match. But come with me into the park, and you shall learn the condition of my secrecy."

And passing through the upper gate, they entered the Home Park.

About an hour after this, Norris returned to the revel. His whole demeanour was altered, and his looks were ghastly pale. He sought out the queen, who had returned to the seat in the embrasure.

"What has happened?" said Anne, in a low tone, as he approached her. "Have you slain the spy?"

"No," he replied; "but I have purchased our safety at a terrible price."

"You alarm me, Norris—what mean you?" cried she.

"I mean this," he answered, regarding

her with passionate earnestness—"that you must love me now, for I have perilled my salvation for you. That tall monk was Herne the Hunter!"

IV.

OF THE SECRET INTERVIEW BETWEEN NORRIS AND ANNE BOLEYN;—AND OF THE DISSIMULATION PRACTISED BY THE KING.

HENRY'S attentions to Jane Seymour at the masqued fête were so marked, that the whole court was made aware of his passion. But it was not anticipated that any serious and extraordinary consequences would result from the intoxication,—far less that the queen herself would be removed to make way for her successful rival. It was after-

wards, however, remembered that at this time, Henry held frequent, long, and grave conferences with the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, and appeared to be engrossed in the meditation of some project.

After the scene at the revel, Anne did not make another exhibition of jealousy. But it was not that she was reconciled to her situation, or in any way free from uneasiness. On the contrary, the unhappy Catherine of Arragon did not suffer more in secret; but she knew from experience, that with her royal consort all reproaches would be unavailing.

One morning, when she was alone within her chamber, her father, who was now Earl of Wiltshire, obtained admittance to her.

"You have a troubled look, my dear lord," she said, as she motioned him to a seat.

"And well I may have," he replied.

"Oh! Anne, words cannot express my anxiety at the present state of things."

"It will speedily pass by, my lord," she replied; "the king will soon be tired of his new idol."

"Not before he has overthrown the old one, I fear," rejoined the earl. "Jane Seymour's charms have usurped entire sovereignty over him. And with all her air of ingenuousness and simplicity, the minion is artful and dangerous. She has a high mark, I am persuaded—no less than the throne."

"But Henry cannot wed her,—he cannot divorce me," said Anne.

"So thought Catherine of Arragon," replied her father; "and yet she was divorced. Anne, I am convinced that a plot is hatching against you."

"You do not fear for my life, father," cried Anne, trembling.

"I trust there are no grounds for charges against you by which it might be brought in jeopardy," replied the earl, gravely.

"None, father, none!" she exclaimed.

"I am glad to hear it," said the earl; "for I have heard that the king has said to one who suggested another divorce to him—'No; if the queen comes within the scope of the divorce, she also comes within the pale of the scaffold.'"

"A pledge was extorted from him to that effect," said Anne, in a hollow voice.

"That an attempt will be made against you, I firmly believe," said the earl; "but if you are wholly innocent, you have nothing to fear."

"Oh, father, I know not that," cried Anne. "Innocence avails little with the stony-hearted Henry."

"It will prove your best safeguard," said

the earl. "And now farewell, daughter. Heaven guard you! Keep the strictest watch upon yourself."

So saying, he quitted the apartment, and as soon as she was left alone, the unhappy Anne burst into an agony of tears.

From this state of affliction she was roused by hearing her own name pronounced in low accents, and looking up, she beheld Sir Henry Norris.

"Oh! Norris," she said, in a tone of reproach, "you have come hither to destroy me."

"No one knows of my coming," he said; "at least no one who will betray me. I was brought hither by one who will take care we are not observed."

"By Herne?" demanded Anne.

Norris answered in the affirmative.

"Would you had never leagued yourself

with this fiend!" she cried. "I fear the rash act will bring destruction upon us both."

"It is too late to retract now," he replied; "besides, there was no help for it. I sacrificed myself to preserve you."

"But will the sacrifice preserve me?" she cried. "I fear not. I have just been told that the king is preparing a terrible scheme against me—that he meditates removing me, to make way for Jane Seymour."

"You have heard the truth, madam," replied Norris; "he will try to bring you to the block."

"And with him, to try is to achieve," said Anne. "Oh! Norris, it is a fearful thing to contemplate such a death."

"But why contemplate it, madam?" said Norris; "why, if you are satisfied that the king has such designs against you—why, if you feel that he will succeed, tarry for the

fatal blow? Fly with me—fly with one who loves you, and will devote his whole life to you—who regards you, not as the queen, but as Anne Boleyn. Relinquish this false and hollow grandeur, and fly with me to happiness and peace."

"And relinquish my throne to Jane Seymour?" rejoined Anne. "Never! I feel that all you assert is true—that my present position is hazardous—that Jane Seymour is in the ascendant, while I am on the decline, if not wholly sunk—that you love me entirely, and would devote your life to me—still, with all these motives for dread, I cannot prevail upon myself voluntarily to give up my title, and to abandon my post to a rival."

"You do not love me then as I love you, Anne," said Norris. "If I were king, I would abandon my throne for you."

"You think so now, Norris, because you are *not* king," she replied. "But I *am* queen, and will remain so till I am forced to abandon my dignity."

"I understand, madam," rejoined Norris, gloomily. "But, oh! bethink you to what risks you expose yourself. You know the king's terrible determination—his vindictiveness, his ferocity."

"Full well," she replied—"Full well. But I will rather die a queen than live disgraced and ruined. In wedding Henry the Eighth, I laid my account to certain risks, and those I must brave."

Before Norris could urge anything further, the door was suddenly opened, and a tall, dark figure, entered the chamber, and said hastily,

"The king is at hand."

"One word more, and it is my last," said

Norris to Anne. "Will you fly with me to-night? all shall be ready."

"I cannot," replied Anne.

"Then your fate is sealed!" said Herne. "Away!" he added, dragging Norris forcibly behind the tapestry.

Scarcely had they disappeared when Henry entered the chamber. He was in a gayer mood than had been usual with him of late.

"I am come to tell you, madam," he said, "that I am about to hold jousts in the castle on the first day of May, at which your good brother and mine, the lord Rochford, will be the challenger, while I myself shall be the defendant. You will adjudge the prize."

"Why not make Jane Seymour queen of the jousts?" said Anne, unable to resist the remark.

"She will be present at them," said Henry,

"but I have my own reasons," he added, significantly, "for not wishing her to appear as queen on this occasion."

"Whatever may be your reasons, the wish is sufficient for me," said Anne. "Nay, will you not tarry a moment with me? It is long since we have had any converse in private together."

"I am busy at this moment," replied Henry, bluffly; "but what is it you would say to me?"

"I would only reproach you for some lack of tenderness, and much neglect," said Anne. "Oh, Henry! do you remember how you swore by your life—your crown—your faith—all that you held sacred or dear—that you would love me ever?"

"And so I would, if I could," replied the king; "but unfortunately the heart is not entirely under control. Have you yourself,

for instance, experienced no change in your affections?"

"No," replied Anne; "I have certainly suffered severely from your too evident regard for Jane Seymour; but though deeply mortified and distressed, I have never for a moment been shaken in my love for your majesty."

"I am glad to hear it," said Henry. "I thought I had perceived some slight diminution in your regard."

"You did yourself grievous injustice by the supposition," replied Anne.

"I would fain believe so," said the king; "but there are some persons who would persuade me that you have not only lost your affection for me, but have even cast eyes of regard on another."

"Those who told you so lied," cried

Anne, passionately. "Never woman was freer from such imputation than myself."

"Never woman was more consummate hypocrite," muttered Henry.

"You do not credit me, I see?" cried Anne.

"If I did not, I should know how to act," replied the king. "You remember my pledge."

"Full well," replied Anne; "and if love and duty would not restrain me, fear would."

"So I felt," rejoined the king; "but there are some of your sex upon whom nothing will operate as a warning,—so faithless and inconstant are they by nature. It has been hinted to me that you are one of these. But I cannot think it. I can never believe that a woman for whom I have placed my very throne in jeopardy—for

whom I have divorced my queen—whose family I have elevated and ennobled—and whom I have placed upon the throne,—would play me false. It is monstrous!—incredible."

"It is—it is!" replied Anne.

"And now, farewell," said Henry. "I have stayed longer than I intended; and I should not have mentioned these accusations, which I regard as wholly groundless, unless you had reproached me."

And he quitted the chamber, leaving Anne in a strange state of perplexity and terror.

V.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE JOUSTS.

THE first of May arrived; and though destined to set in darkness and despair, it arose in sunshine and smiles.

All were astir at an early hour within the castle, and preparations were made for the approaching show. Lists were erected in the upper quadrangle, and the whole of the vast area was strewn with sand. In front of the royal lodgings was raised a gal-

lery, the centre of which being set apart for the queen and her dames, was covered with cloth of gold and crimson velvet, on which the royal arms were gorgeously emblazoned. The two wings were likewise richly decorated, and adorned with scutcheons and pennons, while from the battlements of the eastern side of the court were hung a couple of long flags.

As soon as these preparations were completed, a throng of pages, esquires, armourers, archers, and henchmen, entered it from the Norman gateway, and took up positions within the barriers, the space without the pales being kept by a double line of halberdiers. Next came the trumpeters, mounted on richly-caparisoned horses, and having their clarions decorated with silken bandrols, fringed with gold. Stationing themselves at the principal entrance of the lists, they were speedily joined by the

heralds, pursuivants, and other officers of the tilt-yard.

Presently afterwards, the Duke of Suffolk, who was appointed judge of the lists, appeared, and rode round the arena to see that all was in order. Apparently well satisfied with the survey, he dismounted, and proceeded to the gallery.

Meanwhile, the crowd within the court was increased by a great influx of the different members of the household, amongst whom were Shoreditch, Paddington, and Hector Cutbeard.

"Well, this promises to be a splendid sight," said the clerk of the kitchen; "the king will, no doubt, do his devoir gallantly for the sake of the bright eyes that will look upon him."

"You mean the queen's, of course?" said Shoreditch.

"I mean hers who may be queen," replied Cutbeard—"Mistress Jane Seymour."

"*May* be queen?" exclaimed Shoreditch. "You surely do not think the king will divorce his present consort?"

"Stranger things have happened," replied Cutbeard, significantly. "If I am not greatly out in my reckoning," he added, "this is the last spectacle Queen Anne will behold."

"The saints forfend!" cried Shoreditch; "what reason have you for thinking so?"

"That I may not declare," replied Cutbeard; "but before the jousts are over, you will see whether I have been rightly informed or not."

"Hush!" exclaimed Shoreditch. "There is a tall monk eyeing us strangely; and I am not certain that he has not overheard what you have said."

"He is welcome to the intelligence," replied Cutbeard; "the end will prove its truth."

Though this was uttered in a confident tone, he, nevertheless, glanced with some misgiving at the monk, who stood behind Paddington. The object of the investigation was a very tall man, with a cowl drawn over his brow. He had a ragged black beard, fierce dark eyes, and a complexion like bronze. Seeing Cutbeard's glance anxiously fixed upon him, he advanced towards him, and said, in a low tone—

"You have nothing to fear from me; but talk not so loud, if you value your head."

So saying, he proceeded to another part of the lists.

"Who is that tall monk?" asked Paddington.

"Devil knows!" answered Cutbeard. "I

never saw him before; but he has a villanous and cut-throat look."

Soon afterwards, a flourish of trumpets was heard, and amid their joyous bruit, the queen, sumptuously arrayed in cloth of gold and ermine, and having a small crown upon her brow, entered the gallery, and took her seat within it. Never had she looked more beautiful than on this fatal morning; and in the eyes of all the beholders she completely eclipsed her rival, Jane Seymour. The latter, who stood on her right hand, and was exquisitely attired, had a thoughtful and anxious air, as if some grave matter weighed upon her mind.

While the queen's attendants were taking their places, Lord Rochford, accompanied by Sir Henry Norris, and the Earls of Surrey and Essex, entered the lists. The four knights were completely armed, and mounted

on powerful steeds barded with rich cloth of gold, embroidered with silver letters. Each had a great crimson plume in his helmet. They rode singly round the arena, and bowed as they passed the royal gallery, Norris bending almost to his saddle-bow while performing his salutation to the queen.

The field being thus taken by the challengers, who retired to the upper end of the court, a trumpet was thrice sounded by a herald, and an answer was immediately made by another herald, stationed opposite Henry the Seventh's buildings. When the clamour ceased, the king, fully armed, and followed by the Marquis of Dorset, Sir Thomas Wyat, and the Lord Clifford, rode into the lists.

Henry was equipped in a superb suit of armour, inlaid with gold, and having a breastplate of the globose form, then in vogue. His helmet was decorated with a

large snow-white plume. The trappings of his steed were of crimson velvet, embroidered with the royal arms, and edged with great letters of massive gold bullion, full of pearls and precious stones. He was attended by a hundred gentlemen, armourers, and other officers, arrayed in white velvet.

Having ridden round the court like the others, and addressed his salutation exclusively to Jane Seymour, Henry took his station with his companions near the base of the Round Tower, the summit of which was covered with spectators, as were the towers and battlements around.

A trumpet was now sounded, and the king and the Lord Rochford having each taken a lance from his esquire, awaited the signal to start from the Duke of Suffolk, who was seated in the left wing of the royal gallery. It was not long delayed. As the

clarion sounded clearly and loudly for the third time, he called out that the champions might go.

No sooner were the words uttered, than the thundering tramp of the steeds resounded, and the opponents met mid-way. Both their lances were shivered; but as the king did not, in the slightest degree, change his position, he was held to have the best of it. Courses were then run by the others, with varied success, the Marquis of Dorset being unhorsed by Sir Henry Norris, whose prowess was rewarded by the plaudits of the assemblage, and what was infinitely more dear to him, by the smiles of the queen.

"You have ridden well, Norris," cried Henry, advancing towards him. "Place yourself opposite me, and let us splinter a lance together."

As Norris reined back his steed, in com-

pliance with the injunction, the tall monk stepped from out the line, and drawing near him, said, "If you wish to prove victorious, aim at the upper part of the king's helmet." And with these words, he withdrew.

By the time Norris had placed his lance in the rest, the trumpet sounded. The next moment, the word was given, and the champions started. Henry rode with great impetuosity, and struck Norris in the gorget with such good will that both he and his steed were shaken.

But Norris was more fortunate. Following the advice of the monk, he made the upper part of the king's helmet his mark, and the blow was so well dealt, that, though it did not dislodge the royal horseman, it drove back his steed on its haunches.

The success was so unequivocal, that Norris was at once declared the victor by

the judge. No applause, however, followed the decision, for fear of giving offence to the king.

Norris dismounted, and committing his steed to the care of his esquire, and his lance to his page, took off his helmet, and advanced towards the royal gallery, near which the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyat were standing talking with the other dames. As Norris drew near, Anne leaned over the edge of the gallery, smiled at him tenderly, and, whether by design or accident, let fall her embroidered handkerchief.

Norris stooped to pick it up, regarding her, as he did so, with a glance of the most passionate devotion. A terrible gaze, however, was fixed on the unfortunate pair at that moment. It was that of the king. While Henry was careering in front of the gallery to display himself before Jane Sey-

mour, a tall monk approached him, and said—"Look at Sir Henry Norris!"

Thus addressed, Henry raised his beaver, that he might see more distinctly, and beheld Norris take up the embroidered handkerchief, which he recognised as one that he had given, in the early days of his affection, to the queen.

The sight stung him almost to madness, and he had great difficulty in repressing his choler. But if this slight action, heightened to importance, as it was, by the looks of the parties, roused his ire, it was nothing to what followed. Instead of restoring it to the queen, Norris, unconscious of the danger in which he stood, pressed the handkerchief fervently to his lips.

"I am hitherto the victor of the jousts," he said; "may I keep this as the prize?"

Anne smiled assent.

"It is the proudest I ever obtained," pursued Norris. And he placed it within his helmet.

"Does your majesty see that?" said the tall monk, who still remained standing near the king.

"Death of my life!" exclaimed Henry, "it is the very handkerchief I gave her before our union! I can contain myself no longer, and must perforce precipitate matters. What, ho!" he cried, riding up to that part of the gallery where the Duke of Suffolk was seated —"Let the jousts be stopped!"

"Wherefore, my dear liege?" said Suffolk. "The Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyat are about to run a course."

"Let them be stopped, I say!" cried Henry, in a tone that admitted of no dispute. And wheeling round his charger, he dashed into the middle of the barriers,

shouting in loud, authoritative accents—"The jousts are at an end! Disperse!"

The utmost consternation was occasioned by the announcement. The Duke of Suffolk instantly quitted his seat, and pressed through the crowd to the king, who whispered a few hasty words in his ear. Henry then called to the Earl of Surrey, the Marquis of Dorset, the Lord Clifford, Wyat, and some others, and bidding them attend him, prepared to quit the court. As he passed the royal gallery, Anne called to him, in an agonized voice—

"Oh! Henry! what is the matter—what have I done?"

But without paying the slightest attention to her, he dashed through the Norman Gate, galloped down the lower quadrangle, and quitted the castle.

The confusion that now ensued may be

imagined. All saw that something extraordinary and terrible had taken place, though few knew precisely what it was. Dismay sat in every countenance, and the general anxiety was heightened by the agitation of the queen, who, uttering a piercing scream, fell back, and was borne off in a state of insensibility by her attendants.

Unable to control himself at the sight, Norris burst through the guard, and rushing up the great staircase, soon gained the apartment to which the queen had been conveyed. Owing to the timely aid afforded her, she was speedily restored; and the first person her eyes fell upon was her lover. At the sight of him a glance of affection illumined her features, but it was instantly changed into an expression of alarm.

At this juncture, the Duke of Suffolk,

who, with Bouchier and a party of halberdiers, had entered the room, stepped up to the queen and said—

"Will it please you, madam, to retire to an inner apartment. I grieve to say you are under arrest."

"Arrest!" exclaimed Anne; "for what crime, your grace?"

"You are charged with incontinency towards the king's highness," replied Suffolk, sternly.

"But I am innocent," cried Anne—"as Heaven shall judge me, I am innocent!"

"I trust you will be able to prove yourself so, madam," said Suffolk. "Sir Henry Norris, your person is likewise attached."

"Then I am lost indeed!" exclaimed Anne, distractedly.

"Do not let these false and malignant accusations alarm you, madam," said Norris. "You have nothing to fear. I will die protesting your innocence."

"Sir Henry Norris," said the duke, coldly, "your own imprudence has brought about this result."

"I feel it," replied Norris; "and I deserve the worst punishment that can be inflicted upon me for it. But I declare to you,—as I will declare upon the rack, if I am placed upon it,—that the queen is wholly innocent. Let her not suffer for my fault."

"You hear what Sir Henry says," cried Anne; "and I call upon you to recollect the testimony he has borne."

"I shall not fail to do so, madam," replied Suffolk. "Your majesty will have strict justice."

"Justice!" echoed Anne, with a laugh of bitter incredulity. "Justice from Henry the Eighth?"

"Beseech you, madam, do not destroy yourself," said Norris, prostrating himself before her. "Recollect by whom you are surrounded. My folly and madness have brought you into this strait, and I sincerely implore your pardon for it."

"You are not to blame, Norris," said Anne—"it is fate, not you, that has destroyed me. The hand that has dealt this blow is that of a queen within the tomb."

"Captain Bouchier," said the Duke of Suffolk, addressing that officer, who stood near him, "you will convey Sir Henry Norris to the strong-room in the lower gateway, whence he will be removed to the Tower."

"Farewell, for ever, Norris!" cried Anne,

"We shall meet no more on earth. In what has fallen on me, I recognise the hand of retribution. But the same measure which has been meted to me shall be dealt to others. I denounce Jane Seymour before Heaven. She shall not long retain the crown she is about to snatch from me."

"That imprecation had better have been unuttered, madam," said the duke.

"Be advised, gracious madam!" cried Norris; "and do not let your grief and distraction place you in the power of your enemies. All may yet go well."

"I denounce her!" persisted Anne, wholly disregarding the caution; "and I, also, denounce the king. No union of his shall be happy, and other blood than mine shall flow."

At a sign from the duke, she was here borne, half-suffocated with emotion, to an

inner apartment, while Norris was conveyed by Bouchier and a company of halberdiers to the lower gateway, and placed within the prison-chamber.

VI.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN ANNE BOLEYN AND THE DUKE OF SUFFOLK;—AND HOW HERNE THE HUNTER APPEARED TO HER IN THE ORATORY.

For some hours, Anne Boleyn's attendants were alarmed for her reason, and there seemed good grounds for the apprehension—so wildly and incoherently did she talk, and so violently comport herself—she who was usually so gentle—now weeping as if her soul would pass away in tears—now

breaking into fearful hysterical laughter. It was a piteous sight, and deeply moved all who witnessed it. But towards evening she became calmer, and desired to be left by herself. Her wish being complied with, she fell upon her knees, and besought Heaven's forgiveness for her manifold offences.

"May my earthly sufferings," she cried, "avail me hereafter, and may my blood wash out my guilt! I feel the enormity of my offence, and acknowledge the justice of my punishment. Pardon me, oh! injured Catherine—pardon me, I implore thee! Thou seest in me the most abject, pitiable woman, in the whole realm! Overthrown, neglected, despised—about to die a shameful death—what worse can befal me! Thine anguish was great, but it was never sharpened by remorse like mine. Oh! that my life were to live over again! I would resist

all the dazzling temptations I have yielded to—above all, I would not injure thee. Oh, that I had resisted Henry's love—his false vows—his fatal lures! But it is useless to repine. I have acted wrongfully,—and must pay the penalty of my crime. May my tears, my penitence, my blood, operate as an atonement, and procure me pardon from the Merciful Judge before whom I shall shortly appear!"

In such prayers and lamentations she passed more than an hour, when her attendants entered to inform her that the Duke of Suffolk and the Lords Audley and Cromwell were without, and desired to see her. She immediately went forth to them.

"We are come to acquaint you, madam," said Suffolk, "that you will be removed, at an early hour to-morrow morning, to the Tower, there to abide during the king's pleasure."

"If the king will have it so, my lords," she replied, "I must needs go—but I protest my innocence, and will protest it to the last. I have ever been a faithful and loyal consort to his highness, and though I may not have demeaned myself to him so humbly and gratefully as I ought to have done—seeing how much I owe him—yet I have lacked nothing in affection and duty. I have had jealous fancies and suspicions of him, especially of late, and have troubled him with them; but I pray his forgiveness for my folly, which proceeded from too much regard, and, if I am acquitted of my present charge, I will offend him so no more."

"We will report what you say to the king," rejoined Suffolk, gravely; "but we are bound to add, that his highness does not act on mere suspicion; the proofs of your guilt being strong against you."

"There can be no such proofs," cried Anne, quickly. "Who are my accusers—and what do they state?"

"You are charged with conspiring against the king's life, and dishonouring his bed," replied Suffolk, sternly. "Your accusers will appear in due season."

"They are base creatures suborned for the purpose," cried Anne. "No loyal person would so forswear himself."

"Time will shew you who they are, madam," said Suffolk. "But having now answered all your questions, I pray you permit us to retire."

"Shall I not see the king before I am taken to the Tower?" said Anne, upon whom the terror of her situation rushed with new force.

"His highness has quitted the castle," replied Suffolk, "and there is no likelihood of his return to-night."

"You tell me so to deceive me," cried Anne. "Let me see him—let me throw myself at his feet. I can convince him of my innocence—can move him to compassion. Let me see him, I implore of you—I charge you."

"I swear to you, madam, that the king has departed for Hampton Court," replied Suffolk.

"Then take me to him there, under strong guard, or as secretly as you please," she cried, passionately. "I will return with you instantly if I am unsuccessful."

"Were I to comply with your request it would be fruitless, madam," replied Suffolk; "the king would not see you."

"Oh, Suffolk!" cried Anne, prostrating herself before him, "I have shewn you many kindnesses in my season of power, and have always stood your friend with the

king. Do me this favour now. I will never forget it. Introduce me to the king. I am sure I can move his heart if I can only see him."

"It would cost me my head, madam," said the duke, in an inexorable tone. "Rise, I pray you."

"You are more cruel than the king," said Anne, obeying. "And now, my lords," she continued, with more composure and dignity, "since you refuse my last request, and plainly prove to me the sort of justice I may expect, I will not detain you longer. I shall be ready to attend you to the Tower to-morrow."

"The barge will be ready an hour before dawn," said Suffolk.

"Must I then go by water?" asked Anne.

"Such are the king's commands," replied Suffolk.

"It is no matter," she rejoined. "I shall be ready when you will, for I shall not retire to rest during the night."

Upon this, Suffolk and the others withdrew, and Anne again retired to the oratory.

She remained alone, brooding, in a state of indescribable anguish, upon the probable fate awaiting her, when all at once raising her eyes, she beheld a tall dark figure near the arras.

Even in the gloom, she recognised Herne the Hunter, and with difficulty repressed a scream.

"Be silent," cried Herne, with an emphatic gesture. "I am come to deliver you."

Anne could not repress a joyful cry.

"Not so loud," rejoined Herne, "or you will alarm your attendants. I will set you free on certain conditions."

"Ah! conditions!" exclaimed Anne, recoiling—"if they are such as will affect my eternal welfare, I cannot accept them."

"You will repent it when it is too late," replied Herne. "Once removed to the Tower, and I can no longer aid you. My power extends only to the forest and the castle."

"Will you take me to the king at Hampton Court?" said Anne.

"No," replied Herne. "It would be useless. I will only do what I have stated. If you fly with me, you can never appear again as Anne Boleyn. Sir Henry Norris shall be set free at the same time, and you shall both dwell with me in the forest. Come!"

"I cannot go," said Anne, holding back; "it were to fly to a worse danger. I may save my soul now, but if I embrace your offer, I am lost for ever."

Herne laughed derisively.

"You need have no fear on that score," he said.

"I will not trust you," replied Anne. "I have yielded to temptation already, and am now paying the penalty of it."

"You are clinging to the crown," said Herne, "because you know that by this step you will irrecoverably lose it. And you fancy that some change may yet operate to your advantage with the king. It is a vain, delusive hope. If you leave this castle for the Tower, you will perish ignominiously on the block."

"What will be, must be," replied Anne. "I will not save myself in the way you propose."

"Norris will say, and with reason, that you love him not," cried Herne.

"Then he will wrong me," replied Anne;

"for I *do* love him. But of what account were a few years of feverish happiness compared with endless torture."

"I will befriend you in spite of yourself," vociferated Herne, seizing her arm; "you *shall* go with me!"

"I will not," said Anne, falling on her knees. "Oh, Father of Mercy!" she cried, energetically, "deliver me from this fiend!"

"Take your fate then!" rejoined Herne, dashing her furiously backwards.

And when her attendants, alarmed by the sound, rushed into the chamber, they found her stretched on the floor in a state of insensibility.

VII.

HOW HERNE APPEARED TO HENRY IN THE HOME PARK.

On that same night, at a late hour, a horseman, mounted on a powerful steed, entered the eastern side of the Home Park, and stationed himself beneath the trees. He had not been there long, when the castle clock tolled forth the hour of midnight, and ere the deep strokes died away, a second horseman was seen galloping across the moonlit glade towards him.

"Has all been done as I directed, Suffolk?" he demanded, as the new comer approached him.

"It has, my liege," replied the duke. "The queen is imprisoned within her chamber, and will be removed, at early dawn, to the Tower."

"You had better start in an hour from this time," said the king. "It is a long passage by water, and I am anxious to avoid all chance of attempt at rescue."

"Your wishes shall be obeyed," replied the duke. "Poor soul! her grief was most agonizing, and I had much ado to maintain my composure. She implored, in the most passionate manner, to be allowed to see your highness before her removal. I told her it was impossible; and that even if you had been at the castle, you would not listen to her supplications."

"You did right," rejoined Henry; "I will never see her more,—not that I fear being moved by her prayers, but that, knowing how deceitful and faithless she is, I loathe to look upon her. What is expressed upon the matter by the household? Speak frankly!"

"Frankly, then," replied the duke, "your highness's proceedings are regarded as harsh and unjustifiable. The general opinion is, that you only desire to remove Anne to make way for Mistress Jane Seymour."

"Ha! they talk thus, do they?" cried the king. "I will silence some of their saucy prating ere long. Tell all who venture to speak to you on the subject that I have long suspected the queen of a secret liking for Norris, but that I determined to conceal my suspicions till I found I had good warrant for them. That occurred, as

you know, some weeks ago. However, I awaited a pretext for proceeding against them, and it was furnished by their own imprudence to-day. Expecting that something would occur, I had made my preparations; nor was I deceived. You may add, also, that not until my marriage is invalidated, Anne's offspring illegitimatized, and herself beheaded, shall I consider the foul blot upon my name removed."

"Has your majesty any further commands!" said Suffolk. "I saw Norris in his prison before I rode forth to you."

"Let him be taken to the Tower, under a strong escort, at once," said Henry. "Lord Rochford, I suppose, has already been removed there?"

"He has," replied the duke. "Shall I attend your majesty to your followers?"

"It is needless," replied the king.

"They are waiting for me, close at hand, at the foot of Datchet-bridge. Farewell, my good brother; look well to your prisoners. I shall feel more easy when Anne is safely lodged within the Tower."

So saying, he wheeled round, and striking spurs into his steed, dashed through the trees, while the duke rode back to the castle.

Henry had not proceeded far, when a horseman, mounted on a sable steed, emerged from the thicket, and galloped up to him. The wild attire and antlered helm of this personage proclaimed that it was Herne.

"Ah, thou here, demon!" cried the king, his lion nature overmastered by superstitious fear for a moment. "What wouldst thou?"

"You are on the eve of committing a great crime," replied Herne; "and I told

you that at such times I would always appear to you."

"To administer justice is not to commit a crime," rejoined the king. "Anne Boleyn deserves her fate."

"Think not to impose on me as you have imposed on Suffolk!" cried Herne, with a derisive laugh. "I know your motives better. I know you have no proof of her guilt, and that in your heart of hearts you believe her innocent. But you destroy her because you would wed Jane Seymour! We shall meet again ere long—ho! ho! ho!"

And giving the rein to his steed, he disappeared among the trees.

VIII.

THE SIGNAL GUN.

ANNE BOLEYN'S arraignment took place in the great hall of the White Tower, on the 16th of May, before the Duke of Norfolk, who was created lord high steward for the occasion, and twenty-six peers. The duke had his seat under a canopy of state, and beneath him sat the Earl of Surrey as deputy earl-marshal.

Notwithstanding an eloquent and impas-

sioned defence, Anne was found guilty; and having been required to lay aside her crown and the other insignia of royalty, was condemned to be burned or beheaded at the king's pleasure.

On the following day, she was summoned to the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, whither she was privately conveyed; and her marriage with the king was declared by Cranmer to be null and void, and to have always been so. Death by the axe was the doom awarded to her by the king, and the day appointed for the execution was Friday, the 19th of May, at the hour of noon.

Leaving the conduct of the fatal ceremony to the Duke of Suffolk, who had orders to have a signal gun fired from the summit of the White Tower, and to be answered from various points, when all was over, Henry repaired to Windsor Castle on the

evening of Thursday. Before this, he had formally offered his hand to Jane Seymour; and while the unfortunate queen was languishing within the Tower, he was basking in the smiles of his new mistress, and counting the hours till he could make her his own. On the Tuesday before the execution, Jane Seymour retired to her father's mansion, Wolff-Hall, in Wiltshire, where preparations were made for the marriage, which it was arranged should take place there in private on the Saturday.

On arriving at the castle, Henry gave out that he should hunt on the following morning in the Great Park, and retired to his closet. But he did not long remain there, and putting on the disguise of a yeoman of the guard, descended by the narrow flight of steps (already mentioned as occupying the same situation as the existing Hundred

Steps), to the town, and proceeded to the Garter, where he found a number of guests assembled, discussing the affairs of the day, and Bryan Bowntance's strong ale at the same time. Amongst the number were, the Duke of Shoreditch, Paddington, Hector Cutbeard, and Kit Coo. At the moment of the king's entrance, they were talking of the approaching execution.

"Oh! the vanity of worldly greatness!" exclaimed Bryan, lifting up his hands. "Only seven years ago, last Saint George's day, this lovely queen first entered the castle with the king, amid pomp, and splendour, and show, and with a long life, apparently, of happiness. And now she is condemned to die!"

"But if she has played the king false, she deserves her doom," replied Shoreditch. "I would behead my own wife if

she served me the same trick—that is, if I could."

"You do right to say 'if you could,'" rejoined Paddington. "The beheading a wife is a royal privilege, and cannot be enjoyed by a subject."

"Well, I wonder how the king could prefer Mistress Jane Seymour, for my part!" said Hector Cutbeard. "To my thinking she is not to be compared with Queen Anne."

"She has a lovely blue eye, and a figure as straight as an arrow," returned Shoreditch. "How say you, master?" he added, turning to the king. "What think you of Mistress Jane Seymour?"

"I think her passably fair, friend," replied Henry.

"But how as compared with the late—that is, the present queen; for, poor soul! she has yet some hours to live!" rejoined Shoreditch. "How, as compared with her?"

"Why, I think Jane Seymour the more lovely, undoubtedly," replied Henry. "But I may be prejudiced."

"Not in the least, friend," said Cutbeard. "You but partake of your royal master's humour. Jane Seymour is beautiful, no doubt; and so was Anne Boleyn. Marry! we shall see many fair queens on the throne. The royal Henry has good taste and good management. He sets his subjects a rare example, and shews them how to get rid of troublesome wives. We shall all divorce, or hang our spouses, when we get tired of them. I almost wish I was married myself, that I might try the experiment—ha! ha!"

"Well, here's the king's health!" cried Shoreditch; "and wishing him as many wives as he may desire. What say you, friend?" he added, turning to Henry. "Will you not drink that toast?"

"That will I," replied Henry; "but I fancy the king will be content for the present with Mistress Jane Seymour."

"For the present, no doubt," said Hector Cutbeard; "but the time will come—and ere long—when Jane will be as irksome to him as Anne is now."

"Ah! God's death, knave! darest thou say so?" cried Henry, furiously.

"Why, I have said nothing treasonable, I hope," rejoined Cutbeard, turning pale. "I only wish the king to be happy in his own way; and, as he seems to delight in change of wives, I pray that he may have it to his heart's content."

"A fair explanation," replied Henry, laughing.

"Let me give a health, my masters!" cried a tall archer, whom no one had hitherto noticed, rising in one corner of the room.

"It is the headsman of Calais, and may he do his work featly to-morrow."

"Ha! ha! ha! a good toast," cried Hector Cutbeard.

"Seize him who has proposed it," cried the king, rising, "it is Herne the Hunter!"

"I laugh at your threats here as elsewhere, Harry," cried Herne. "We shall meet to-morrow."

And flinging the horn-cup in the face of the man nearest him, he sprang through an open window at the back, and disappeared.

Both Cutbeard and Shoreditch were much alarmed lest the freedom of their expressions should be taken in umbrage by the king; but he calmed their fears by bestowing a good-humoured buffet on the cheek of the latter of them, and quitting the hostel, returned to the castle by the same way he had left it.

On the following morning, about ten o'clock, he rode into the Great Park, attended by a numerous train. His demeanour was moody and stern, and a general gloom pervaded the company. Keeping on the western side of the park, the party crossed Cranbourne Chase; but though they encountered several fine herds of deer, the king gave no orders to uncouple the hounds.

At last, they arrived at that part of the park where Sand-pit Gate is now situated, and pursuing a path bordered by noble trees, a fine buck was suddenly unharboured, upon which Henry gave orders to the huntsmen and others to follow him, adding that he himself should proceed to Snow Hill, where they would find him an hour hence.

All understood why the king wished to be alone, and for what purpose he was

about to repair to the eminence in question, and therefore, without a word, the whole company started off in the chase.

Meanwhile, the king rode slowly through the woods, often pausing to listen to the distant sounds of the hunters, and noticing the shadows on the greensward as they grew shorter, and proclaimed the approach of noon. At length, he arrived at Snow Hill, and stationed himself beneath the trees on its summit.

From this spot a magnificent view of the castle, towering over its pomp of woods, now covered with foliage of the most vivid green, was commanded. The morning was bright and beautiful; the sky cloudless; and a gentle rain had fallen overnight, which had tempered the air, and freshened the leaves and the greensward. The birds were singing blithely in the trees, and at the foot

of the hill couched a herd of deer. All was genial and delightful, breathing of tenderness and peace, and calculated to soften the most obdurate heart.

The scene was not without its effect upon Henry; but a fierce tumult raged within his breast. He fixed his eyes on the Round Tower, which was distinctly visible, and from which he expected the signal, and then tried to peer into the far horizon. But he could discern nothing. A cloud passed over the sun, and cast a momentary gloom over the smiling landscape. At the same time, Henry's fancy was so powerfully excited, that he fancied he could behold the terrible tragedy enacting at the Tower.

"She is now issuing forth into the green in the front of Saint Peter's chapel," said Henry to himself. "I can see her as distinctly as if I were there. Ah! how beauti-

ful she looks—and how she moves all hearts to pity. Suffolk, Richmond, Cromwell, and the Lord Mayor, are there to meet her. She takes leave of her weeping attendants—she mounts the steps of the scaffold firmly—she looks around, and addresses the spectators. How silent they are, and how clearly and musically her voice sounds. She blesses me! I hear it—I feel it here. Now she disrobes herself, and prepares for the fatal axe. It is wielded by the skilful executioner of Calais, and he is now feeling its edge. Now she takes leave of her dames, and bestows a parting gift on each. Again she kneels and prays. She rises. The fatal moment is at hand. Even now she retains her courage —she approaches the block, and places her head upon it. The axe is raised—ha!"

The exclamation was occasioned by a flash of fire from the battlements of the

Round Tower, followed by a volume of smoke, and, in another second, the deep boom of a gun was heard.

At the very moment that the flash was seen, a wild figure, mounted on a coal-black steed, galloped from out the wood, and dashed towards Henry, whose horse reared and plunged as he passed.

"There spoke the death-knell of Anne Boleyn!" cried Herne, regarding Henry, sternly, and pointing to the Round Tower. "The bloody deed is done, and thou art free to wed once more. Away to Wolff Hall, and bring thy new consort to Windsor Castle."

Thus ends the Sixth and last Book of the Chronicle of Windsor Castle.

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